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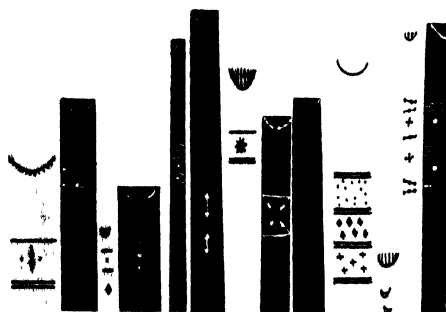


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# S E R M O N S

PREACHED UPON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

BY ROBERT SOUTH, D.D.

PREBENDARY OF WESTMINSTER, AND CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

A NEW EDITION, IN FOUR VOLUMES,

INCLUDING

THE POSTHUMOUS DISCOURSES.

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THE  
CHIEF HEADS OF THE SERMONS.

VOL. IV.

SERMON I.

OBSTINATE SINNERS DOOMED TO ETERNAL PERDITION.

PSALM XCV. 11.

*Unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest.*

By this expression, "I swear in my wrath," is meant God's peremptory declaring his resolution to destroy the murmuring and rebellious Jews, 1. The word "swearing" is very significant, and seems to import,

1. The certainty of the sentence here pronounced, 1.

2. The terror of it; if the children of Israel should say, "Let not God speak to us, lest we die," 2.

As for the word *rest*, we must admit in this scripture, as well as in many others of the like nature, a double interpretation; 1st. A temporal rest in Canaan the promised land. 2dly. An eternal rest in the heavenly Canaan, 2.

The words thus explained are drawn into one proposition, viz., that God sometimes in this life, upon extraordinary provocations, may and does inevitably design and seal up obstinate sinners to eternal destruction, 3. The prosecution is managed under these three particulars:

I. Showing how and by what means God seals up a sinner to perdition. There are three ways by which God usually does this:

1. By withholding the virtue and power of his ordinances, 3.

2. By restraining the convincing power of his providences, 4. And there are three sorts of providences instanced, in which God often speaks convincingly. 1st. In a general common calamity, 5. 2dly. By particular, personal, and distinguishing judgments, 6. 3dly. By signal, unexpected deliverances, 7.

3. By delivering up a sinner to a stupidity or a searedness of conscience, 8.

II. Showing what sort of obstinate sinners those are that God deals with in this manner: which are, 1. Such as sin against clear and notable warnings from God, 10. 2. Such as sin against special renewed vows and promises of obedience made to God, 11.

III. Answering and resolving two questions that may arise from the foregoing particulars:

1. Whether the purpose of God passed upon an obstinate sinner (here expressed by God's swearing against him), be absolutely irrevocable? Concerning which it is affirmed that the scripture is full and clear for it, 13.

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2. Whether a man may know such a purpose to have passed upon him, antecedently to its execution? In answer to which, from a consideration of the ordinary ways by which God imparts his will to men, namely, 1st. By his word, 13. 2dly. By men's collection of it from its effects, 14. It is affirmed, that no man in this life can pass any certain judgment concerning the will of God in reference to his own final estate, 15. But here is observed a wide difference between the purpose of God hitherto discoursed of, and that which the schools call God's decree of reprobation. 1st. Because that decree is said to commence upon God's good pleasure and sovereign will, but this purpose upon the provocation of the sinner. 2dly. Because that decree is said to be from all eternity; but this purpose is taken up after some signal provocation, 15; from all which,

IV. We are exhorted to beware of sinning under sin-aggravating circumstances, 16, and shown the danger of dallying with and venturing upon the Almighty, by a daring continuance in a course of sin, 17.

## SERMON II.

### THE FOLLY OF ATHEISM.

#### PSALM XIV. 1.

*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*

In the words we have two particulars, wherein we may consider,

I. An assertion made, "There is no God."

2. The thing asserted, which may be understood, (1.) Of an absolute removal of the divine being and existence; or (2.) Of a removal of God's providence, by which he governs and takes account of all the particular affairs of the world, and more especially of the lives and actions of men, 19.

2. The manner of the assertion, "The fool hath said in his heart;" it wears the badge of guilt, privacy, and darkness, 20.

By "the fool's saying in his heart, There is no God," may be implied,

1. An inward wishing that there was no God, 21.

2. His seeking out arguments to persuade himself that there is none, 21.

3. Not only seeking for reasons and arguments, but also a marvellous readiness to acquiesce in any seeming probability or appearance of reason that may make for his opinion, 22.

4. Another way, different from all the former, for a man to place his sole dependence, as to his chief good and happiness, on any thing besides God, is, as we may so speak, virtually and by consequence for him to "say in his heart, There is no God," 23.

II. The second particular considered is, the person who made this assertion, "the fool;" whose folly will appear from these following reasons:

1. That in making and holding this assertion, he contradicts the general judgment and notion of mankind, 24.

2. That he lays aside a principle easy and suitable to reason, and substitutes in the room of it one strange and harsh, and, at the best, highly improbable, 25.

3. His folly appears from the causes and motives inducing him to take up this opinion, which, amongst others, are, (1.) Great impiety, and disquiet of conscience consequent thereupon. (2.) Great ignorance of nature and natural causes, 26.

4. From those cases, in which such persons begin to doubt and waver, and fly off from their opinion, instanced, (1.) In the time of some great and imminent danger. (2.) In the time of approaching death, 27.

The modern and more thorough-paced sinners affect a superiority in villany above their ancestors; therefore this discourse against atheism is supposed to be of some use; and if so, the most proper use is, to give every one of us a view and prospect into his own heart: and such as are willing to watch over that, so as to prevent this monstrous birth, are advised to beware,

1. Of great and crying sins, such as make the conscience raw and sick.
2. Of discontents about the cross passages of God's providence towards them.
3. Of devoting themselves to pleasure and sensuality, there being nothing in the world that casts God out of the heart like it, 29.

## SERMON III.

THE ISRAELITES' INGRATITUDE TO GOD.

[Preached on the 29th of May, at Westminster Abbey.]

PSALM CVI. 7.

*Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt, they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies, but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea.*

The resemblance between the transactions of Providence with the children of Israel in their redemption from Egypt, and with ourselves in the restoration of the royal family, being briefly considered, 30, 31; to show how like we are to them for their miraculous ingratitude, we must observe three things in the text:

I. The unworthy and ungrateful deportment of the Israelites towards God, upon a most signal mercy and deliverance, "they provoked him;" which expression seems to import an insolent daring resolution to offend; and, as it relates to God, strikes at him in a threefold respect:

1. It rises up against his power and prerogative, 32.
2. It imports an abuse of his goodness, 32.
3. It is an affront upon his long-suffering and his patience, 33.

II. The second thing to be observed is, the aggravation of this deportment from the nature and circumstance of the deliverance, "They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea," 33. The baseness and ingratitude of which God casts in their teeth, by confronting it with the glorious deliverance he vouchsafed them; a deliverance ennobled with these four qualifications:—1. Its greatness, 34. 2. Its unexpectedness, *ib.* 3. The eminent seasonableness of it, 37. 4. Its absolute undeservedness, 38. Our case is severally shown in the above particulars to be parallel to that of the Israelites, and likewise in the return made to God for his goodness.

III. The third thing observable is, the cause of this misbehaviour, "They understood not thy wonders in Egypt." Now in every wonderful passage of providence, two things are to be considered, 40.

1. The author, by whom it is done, 40.
2. The end for which it is done: neither of these, in the cases before us, were understood by the Israelites, nor have been attended to by us as they ought to have been, 41.

## SERMON IV.

FASTING A MEANS OF SUBDUING SIN.

MATTHEW XVII. 21.

*Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.*

It was a general received command, and an acknowledged rule of practice in all ages and places of the Christian world, that we are to "hear the church;" which, being acted by the immediate guidance of the Holy Ghost, hath set apart the time of our Saviour's fasting in the wilderness, to be solemnized with the anniversary exercise of abstinence, for the subduing the flesh and quickening the spirit, 42.

As for the words, among other expositions, they are more judiciously inter-

preted of an evil spirit, having had long and inveterate possession of the party out of whom it was cast; and the sense of them, as improvable into a standing, perpetual precept, is this, that there are some vices which, partly by our temper and constitution, partly by habit and inveterate continuance, have so firm a hold of us, that they cannot be thoroughly dispossessed but with the greatest ardour and constancy of prayer, joined with the harshest severities of mortification, 43, 44.

In the text are two parts:

1st. An intimation of a peculiar duty, prayer and fasting.

2dly. The end and design of it, which is to eject and dispossess the unclean spirit. The entire discussion is managed in three particulars.

I. In taking a survey of the extent of this text, 44.

This duty of fasting admits of several kinds and degrees; the first kind is of constant, universal exercise; universal, both because it obliges at all times, and extends to all persons, 44. The second is a fast of total abstinence, when for some time we wholly abstain from all bodily repasts, 45. The third is an abstinence from bodily refreshments, in respect of a certain sort or degree, and that undertaken for some space of time, 46. This head is closed with a caution, that the observation of fasting in this solemn season should be so strict as not to bend to any man's luxury; so dispensable as not to grate upon his infirmity of body, 48—50.

II. In showing what are the qualifications that must render this duty of fasting acceptable to God, and efficacious to ourselves, 50.

There are four conditions or properties, a joint concurrence of all which is a necessary qualification of it for this great purpose. 1. That it is to be used not as a duty either necessary or valuable in itself, but only as an instrument, 50. 2. That it be done with a hearty detestation of the body of sin, for the weakening of which it is designed, 53. 3. That it be quickened and enlivened with prayer, 54. 4. That it be attended with alms and works of charity, 55.

III. In showing how this duty of fasting comes to have such an influence in dispossessing the evil spirit, and subduing our corruptions, 56.

It does not effect this, either, 1st. By any casual force naturally inherent in itself. Neither, 2dly. By way of merit, as procuring and engaging the help of that grace, that does effect it, 56. But it receives this great virtue, 1. From divine institution. 2. By being a direct defiance to that disposition of body and mind, upon which especially the devil works, 57. But when we have taken all these courses to eject the evil spirit, we must remember that it is to be the work of God himself, whom the blessed spirits adore, and whom the evil obey, 58.

## SERMONS V. VI.

### THE NECESSITY OF IMMEDIATE REPENTANCE.

REV. II. 16.

*Repent; or I will come unto thee quickly, and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*

It is wonderful upon what ground a rational discerning man can satisfy and speak peace to his conscience in the very career of those sins, which, by his own confession, lead him to assured perdition, 59. One would think that the cause of it must of necessity be one of these three:

1st. That he is ignorant of the curse attending his sin, 59. Which cannot be here the cause.

2dly. That he may know the curse, and yet not believe it.

3dly. That though he knows and believes the curse, yet perhaps he relaxes nothing of his sin, because he resolves to bear it, 60.

But it is shown, that it can proceed from neither of these reasons, therefore the true one is conceived to be a presuming confidence of a future repentance: other reasons indeed may allure, this only argues a man into sin, 61. Now the

face of these words is directly set against this soul-devouring imposture of a deferred repentance. In the prosecution of them, it will be convenient to inquire into their occasion. In the 12th verse we find, they are part of a letter to the church (here collectively taken as including in it many particular churches) of Pergamos, indited by the Spirit of God, and directed to the angel, that is the chief pastor of that church, 62.

The letter contains a charge for some sinful abuse that had crept in, and was connived at, ver. 14. This abuse was its toleration of the Nicolaitans, whose heresy consisted in this, 1st. That they held and abetted the eating of sacrifices offered to idols to be lawful. 2dly. That they held and abetted the lawfulness of fornication, 63.

It likewise contained the counsel of speedy and immediate repentance, in the words of the text, in which are two parts :

1. The first stands directed to the church itself: "Repent, or I will come unto thee quickly." God's coming is shown to mean here his approach in the way of judgment, 63.

2. The other part of the words relates to those heretics, "And I will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth:" that is, with the reprehending, discovering force of the word, and the censures of the church, 65. From this expression these two occasional observations are collected :

1. That the word of God, powerfully dispensed, has the force and efficacy of a spiritual sword, 66.

2. When God undertakes the purging of a church, or the reformation of religion, he does it with the weapons of religion, with "the sword of his mouth," 66.

The general explication of the words thus finished, the principal design of them is prosecuted, by enforcing the duty of immediate repentance; which is done,

In showing what that repentance is that is here enjoined, 67.

Repentance in scripture has a threefold acceptation :

1. It is taken for the first act by which the soul turns from sin to God, 68.

2. It is taken for the whole course of a pious life, from a man's first turning from a wicked life to the last period of a godly: which is the only repentance that Socinus will admit. But this is not the proper notion of repentance; 1st. Because then no man could properly be said to have repented till his death. 2dly. Because scripture, no less than the natural reason of the thing itself, places repentance before faith. 3dly. Because scripture makes all those subsequent acts of new obedience after our first turning to God, not to be the integral constituent parts, but the effects, fruits, and consequents of repentance, 68, 69.

3. Repentance is taken for a man's turning to God after the guilt of some particular sin, 69.

II. Arguments are produced to engage us in the speedy and immediate exercise of this duty; which are,

1. That no man can be secure of the future, 70.

2. That, supposing the allowance of time, yet we cannot be sure of power to repent, 71.

3. That, admitting a man has both time and grace to repent, yet, by such delay, the work will be incredibly more difficult, 74. And the delay of this duty is most eminently and signally provoking to God, upon these reasons,

1. Because it is the abuse of a remedy, 77.

2. Because it clearly shows that a man does not love it as a duty, but only intends to use it for an expedient of escape, 78.

3. Because it is evidently a counterplotting of God, and being wise above the prescribed methods of salvation, to which God makes the immediate dereliction of sin necessary, 79.

After the general nature of this subject, follows a consideration of it in particular. The grand instance of it is a death-bed repentance; the efficacy of which, having been much disputed in the world, is here discussed under two heads:

**Q. 4.** This great case of conscience is resolved, whether a death-bed repentance ever is or can be effectual to salvation, 80. Several arguments against it being stated and answered, 80—85; six positive arguments are produced to prove and assert it.

1. That such a repentance, commenced at the last hour of a man's life, has *de facto* proved effectual to salvation, 85.

2. Is taken from the truth and certainty of that saying, owned and attested by God himself, that "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that a man hath not," 86.

3. Because repentance saves not, as it is a work, or such a number of works, but as it is the effect of a renewed nature and a sanctified heart, from which it flows, 87.

4. If to repent sincerely be a thing at the last moments of our lives impossible to be done, then, for that instant, impenitence is not a sin, 88.

5. That to deny that a death-bed repentance can be effectual to salvation, is a clear restraint and limitation of the compass and prerogative of God's mercy, 88.

6. That if a death-bed repentance cannot possibly be effectual to salvation, then a sinner upon his death-bed, having not repented before, may lawfully, and without sin despair, 88.

II. Supposing a death-bed repentance may prove effectual, yet for any one to design and build upon it beforehand, is highly dangerous, and therefore absolutely irrational; which appears from these considerations:

1. From the exceeding unfitness of a man at this time, above all others, to exercise this duty, 89.

2. That there can be no arguments, from which either the dying person himself, or others by him, can certainly conclude that his repentance is sound and effectual, 91.

In fine, this alone can be said for it (and to a considering person no more need to be said against it), that it is only not impossible, 92.

## SERMON VII.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION A PROOF OF HIS DIVINITY.

ROMANS I. 3, 4.

*Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*

Where the construction of the text lies so, that we cannot otherwise reach the full sense of it without making our way through doubts and ambiguities, philosophical discourses are necessary in dispensing the word.

The present exercise therefore consists of two parts:

I. An explication of the words: for the scheme of the Greek carries a very different face from our translation, which difference renders the sense of them very disputable, 93.

The explication is comprised in the resolution of these four inquiries:

1. Whether the translation rightly renders it, that Christ was "declared to be the Son of God," since the original admits of a different signification, 94.

2. What is imputed by this term, "with power," 95.

3. What is intended by the following words, "according to the Spirit of holiness," 95.

4. How those words, "by the resurrection from the dead," are to be understood, 96.

II. An accommodation of the words to the present occasion, which is in showing, first, how Christ's resurrection may be a proper argument to prove his divinity and eternal sonship, 98. Next, that it is the greatest and principal of all others.

And for this we may observe, that it is not only true, but more clear and evident than the other arguments for the proof of the truth of Christ's doctrine, when we consider them as they are generally reducible to these three, 99.

1. The nature of the things taught by him, 99.

2. The fulfilling of prophecies in his person, 100.

3. The miracles and wonderful works which he did in the time of his life, 101. And though these were undoubtedly high proofs of Christ's doctrine, yet his resurrection had a vast pre-eminence over them upon two accounts.

(1.) That all the miracles he did, supposing his resurrection had not followed, would not have had sufficient efficacy to have proved him to be the Messiah. But his resurrection alone, without relation to his preceding miracles, had been a full proof of the truth of his doctrine, which appears upon these two accounts: 1st. That considered absolutely in itself, it did outweigh all the rest of his works put together. 2dly. That it had a more intimate and near connection with his doctrine than any of the rest, 102.

(2.) Because of the general opinion and judgment that the world had of both, 102.

The Jews and unbelievers never attempted to assign any causes of the resurrection besides the power of God, so as by that means to destroy the miraculousness of it, though they constantly took exceptions to Christ's other miracles, still resolving them into some cause short of a divine power; which exceptions may be reduced to these two heads:

1. The great difficulty of discerning when an action is really a miracle, 103.

2. Supposing an action is known to be a miracle, it is as difficult to know whether it proves the truth of the doctrine of that person that does it, or not, 103. But neither of these exceptions takes place against the resurrection. For,

1st. Though we cannot assign the determinate point where the power of nature ends, yet there are some actions that, at first appearance, so vastly transcend it, that there can be no suspicion that they proceed from any power but a divine, 105.

2dly. Should God suffer a miracle to be done by an impostor, yet there was no necessity hence to gather, that God did it to confirm the words of that impostor: for God may do a miracle when and where he pleases, 105.

## SERMON VIII.

### INCREASE OF KNOWLEDGE ATTENDED WITH SORROW.

#### ECCLES. I. 18.

*In much wisdom there is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.*

This assertion is taken up upon Solomon's judgment, who by the very verdict of omniscience itself, was of all men in the world the most knowing. After premising that, in speaking to the text, the patronage of ignorance, especially in things spiritual, is not intended; but if any thing is indeed said against knowledge, it is against that only that is so much adored by the world, and falsely called philosophy; and yet more significantly surnamed by the apostle, "vain philosophy," 107—109.

To rectify the absurd opinions of the world concerning knowledge, and to take down the excessive estimation of it, in the prosecution of the words, it is demonstrated to be the cause, or at least the inseparable companion of sorrow, in three respects, 109.

I. In respect of the nature and properties of the thing itself, 109. Under this head a question is started, Whether or no there be indeed any such thing as true knowledge in the world? And three reasons advanced, which seem to insinuate that there is none, 110. And then the uncertainty of knowledge,



its poorness, and utter inability to contribute to the solid enjoyments of life, is shown in several theological and philosophical problems, 110—112.

II. In respect of the laborious and troublesome acquisition of it: in setting forth which, the scholar's labour is considered with that of the soldier and the husbandman, and a view is taken of those callings to which learning is necessary, the physician, and the lawyer, and the divine, 112—114.

III. In respect of its effects and consequents, three whereof are instanced

1. The increase of knowledge is an increase of the desire of knowledge, 114.

2. Knowledge rewards its followers with the miseries of poverty, and clothes them with rags, 115.

3. Knowledge makes the person who has it the butt of envy, the mark of obloquy and contention; which considered, men are advised to make him that is the great author, also the subject of their knowledge. For though there is a vanity, a sorrow, and a dissatisfaction in the knowledge of created inferior objects, yet we are assured, that "it is life eternal to know God, and whom he has sent, his Son Christ Jesus," 115—117.

## SERMON IX.

PRAYER ANSWERED ONLY WHEN OFFERED IN SINCERITY.

PSALM LXVI. 18.

*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*

The resolution and model of this whole psalm, which is David's grateful commemoration of all God's mercies, together with a retribution of praise being given, and therein the occasion and connection of these words, 118. They are considered two ways, 1st. As they have a peculiar reference to David and his particular condition, and so they are a vehement asseveration of his integrity. 2dly. Absolutely in themselves, and so they are applicable to all men, 119, 120. And being resolved, as they lie in supposition, into a positive assertion, they afford this doctrine; "Whosoever regards iniquity in his heart, the Lord will not hear him." In prosecution of which is shown,

I. What it is for a man to regard or love sin in his heart, which he may be said to do several ways.

1. There is a constant and habitual love of sin in the unregeneracy and corrupt estate of the soul, 120.

2. There is a regarding of sin in the heart, that consists in an unmortified habit or course of sin, much different from the former, because even a child of God may thus regard sin, 122. Which may be evinced, 1st. From example, *ib.* 2dly. From scripture reason, which is grounded upon those exhortations that there are made even to believers for the mortification of sin, 123. And the soul may thus love sin two ways, 1st. Directly, and by a positive pursuance of it. 2dly. Indirectly, and by not attempting a vigorous mortification of it, *ib.*

3. There is another kind of regarding sin in the heart, and that is, by an actual intention of the mind upon sin, 124.

II. What it is to have our prayers accepted with God: and this is to prevail with God for the obtaining the good thing we desire, by virtue of an interest in Jesus Christ, and in the covenant of grace, 125. Several objections to this doctrine stated and answered, 125—128.

III. Whence it is that a man's regarding or loving sin in his heart, hinders his prayers from acceptance with God.

1. Because in this case he cannot pray by the spirit.

2. Because he cannot pray in faith; that is, he cannot build a rational confidence upon any promise, that God will accept him, 128.

3. Because he cannot pray with fervency, which, next to sincerity, is the great qualification of prayer, to which God has annexed the promise of acceptance, 129.

IV. By way of application, the duty of sincerity in our worship is pressed

from these two motives: 1st. By praying to God with insincere, sin-regarding hearts, we incur the certain frustration of all our prayers, 131. 2dly. In such prayers we are not only certain not to gain a blessing, but also we incur the danger of a heavy curse, *ib.* And to direct us how to pray with sincerity, this rule is laid down, to endeavour first to prepare our hearts by a thorough and a strict examination, 132.

## SERMON X.

ALL THINGS KNOWN TO GOD.

1 JOHN III. 20.

*God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.*

The words are plain, and need no explication; therefore, after premising some things concerning God's attributes in general, 133, 134, this doctrine is drawn from them, not much different from the words themselves, viz., that God is an all-knowing God. This is indeed a principle, and therefore ought to be granted; yet since it is now controverted and denied by the Arminians and the Socinians, 135, it is no less needful to be proved. In prosecution of this,

I. The proposition is proved, and that both by scripture and by reason, 136 Under this head we are exhorted to the knowledge of God in Christ, 137.

II. Is shown the excellency of God's knowledge above the knowledge of men or angels, 138; and this appears,

1. From the properties of this knowledge: now its first property is, the exceeding evidence, and consequently the certainty of it, 138. Its second property is this, that it is a knowledge independent upon the existence of the object or thing known, *ib.* For God beholds all things in himself, and that two ways, 1st. By reflecting upon his power, and what he can do, he has a perfect knowledge of all possibilities, and of things that may be produced. 2dly. By reflecting upon his power and his will, he knows whatsoever shall be actually produced, 139.

2. The excellency of God's knowledge appears in respect of his objects, which are all things knowable; but they may be reduced to three especially which God alone perfectly knows, and are not to be known to men or angels. 1st. The nature of God himself, 139. 2dly. Things future, 139—142. 3dly. The thoughts of men, 142.

III. Is shown, by way of application, that the consideration of God's omniscience may serve as an argument to press several duties upon us. 1. It must be a strong motive to bring us to a free confession of all our sins to God, 143. 2. It may enforce us to an humble submission to all God's commands and directions, and that both in respect of belief, 144, and of practice, 145. 3. That as we are commanded to "be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect," we should endeavour to resemble him in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, that we make a true judgment of every thing relating to our temporal or eternal happiness or misery, 145, 146.

## SERMON XI.

[A Fast Sermon, preached in 1658.]

PUBLIC CALAMITY A CALL TO PUBLIC HUMILIATION.

JONAH III. 8, 9.

*But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?*

We are called this day by public authority to the work of humiliation; and the occasion of this work is the deplorable eruption of a sad distemper in sundry parts of the nation, and the cause of this, we are to know, is sin.

In this chapter we have the example of a fast celebrated by heathens (the men of Nineveh), but worthy of the imitation of the best Christians, 147.

Here are several things considerable.

1. Jonah's denunciation of a judgment of God impendent upon them.

2. Their humiliation upon the hearing of this judgment, in which fast or humiliation there is considerable,

1. The manner of it, which consists in two things: 1st. The external humiliation of the body. 2dly. An internal spiritual separation from sin.

2. The universal extent of it, and the particular application of it, ver. 8, 147.

3. The motive of it, which was hope of mercy, and a pardon upon the exercise of this duty, 148.

The words will afford six considerations, which are here discussed.

1st *Observation*. The consideration of a judgment approaching unto, or actually lying upon a people, is a sufficient argument for fasting and humiliation: 1. Because in every judgment God calls for humiliation; they are the alarms of the Almighty, by which he terrifies and awakens sleepy souls, 148. 2. It deserves our humiliation. though this be an displeasing duty to the flesh, yet it is abundantly countervailed by the greatness of the trouble it does remove, 149.

2nd *Observation*. The affliction of the body is a good preparative to the humiliation of the soul. 1. Because the operations of the soul do much follow the disposition and temper of the body. 2. Because afflicting of the body curbs the flesh, and makes it serviceable to the spirit, 149.

3rd *Observation*. The nature of a fast especially consists in a real, sincere separation from sin. The truth of this will appear from these considerations: 1. That fasting is a spiritual duty. 2. The nature of a fast chiefly consists in a separation from sin, because this is the proper end of it, 151.

4th *Observation*. National sins deserve national humiliation, 152. 1. Because a general humiliation tends most to solve the breach of God's honour. 2. Generality gives force and strength to humiliation, 153.

5th *Observation*. The best way to avert a national judgment, is for every particular man to inquire into and amend his own personal particular sins. This is proved, 1. Because particular sins oftentimes fetch down general, universal judgments, 153, which God sometimes inflicts upon that account: 1st, To show us the provoking nature of sin, 154, or else because, though the sin is particular in respect of the subject and cause of it, yet it may be general in respect of its contagion, *ib.* 2. Because if there were no personal there could be no national sin, 154. 3. Because God takes especial notice of particular sins, 155. 4. No humiliation can be well and sincere unless it be personal and particular, 156.

6th *Observation*. Upon our serious humiliation for, and forsaking of our sins, there is sufficient argument in God's mercy to hope for a removal of the severest judgment, 157, which will appear, 1. Because God has promised it, *ib.* 2. Because God has often removed judgments upon a sincere humiliation, 158. 3. Because in this God attains the ends of his judgments, 159, 160.

## SERMON XII.

POVERTY OF SPIRIT ENJOINED BY THE GOSPEL.

MATTHEW V. 3.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Our Saviour begins his sermon on the mount with seven or eight such propositions, as are paradoxes and absurdities to the maxims and practices of the carnal world; and these he ushers in with the text, in which we have two things considerable.

1. A quality or disposition recommended by our Saviour, which is poverty of spirit, 161. In treating whereof,

1. The nature of this poverty of spirit is declared,

(1.) Negatively, by showing what it is not; as, 1. A mere outward indigence, and want of all the accommodations of common life, 162. 2. A sneaking fearfulness and want of courage; there being nothing base in nature, that can be noble in religion, 163.

(2.) Positively, by showing what it is; and it may be said properly to consist in these two things: 1. An inward sense and feeling of our spiritual wants and defects, 164. 2. A sense of our miserable condition by reason of such want, the wretchedness whereof appears from these two considerations: (1.) That we are unable, by any natural strength of our own, to recover and bring ourselves out of this condition, 166. (2.) That during our continuance under it, we are exposed and stand obnoxious to all the curses of the law, 168.

2. The means are shown, by which this poverty of spirit may be obtained, 169. Now there are three ways, by which, through the concurrence of the Holy Ghost with our endeavours, we may bring ourselves to it.

(1.) By a frequent, deep, and serious considering of the relation we stand in towards God, 169.

(2.) By being much in comparing ourselves with the exceeding exactness, perfection, and spirituality of the divine law, 172

(3.) By making a due and spiritual use of all those afflictions and cross events, that the providence of God is pleased to bring us under. 174.

The second general head considered is, the ground or argument upon which this poorness of spirit is recommended; namely, that it entitles him who has it to the kingdom of heaven," 175, 176. In the words, "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven," two things are worthy of remark. 1. The thing promised, the kingdom of heaven; which here signifies not only the future state of glory allotted for the saints in the other world; but that whole complex of blessings, that is exhibited to mankind in the gospel, 176.

2. The manner of the promise; which is in words importing the present time; not "theirs shall be," but "theirs is the kingdom of heaven," 177.

## SERMONS XIII. XIV.

### THE HOPE OF THE HYPOCRITE DELUSIVE.

JOB VIII. 13.

*The hypocrite's hope shall perish.*

Sincerity and hypocrisy are the two great things about which the whole stress of the gospel is laid out; namely, to enforce the one, and to discover and detect the other, 178.

Two things explained to clear the words. 1. What is meant by the hypocrite. all hypocrites may be comprehended under these two sorts. (1.) The gross dissembler, who knowingly pursues some sinful course, endeavouring only to conceal it from the eyes of men, 178. (2.) The formal refined hypocrite, who deceives his own heart; and is the person spoken of in the text, 179.

2. What is meant by this "hope," which is, those persuasions a man has, that he is now in a state of grace, and consequently shall hereafter attain to a state of glory: and this hope may be distinguished into two degrees: 1. A probable opinion. 2. A peremptory persuasion, 179.

After these premises, the words cast themselves into two propositions.

First, That a hypocrite may proceed so far, as to obtain a hope and expectation of a future blessedness. The prosecution whereof lies in three things:

I. Proving that the hypocrites have such hopes. This evinced by two arguments:

1. From the nature and constitution of man's mind, which is vehement and restless in its pursuit after some suitable good, 180.

2. From that peace and comfort that even hypocrites enjoy; which are the

certain effects, and therefore the infallible signs of some hope abiding in the mind, 181.

II. Showing by what ways and means the hypocrite comes first to attain this hope; which are four.

1. By misapprehending God, 183, in his attributes of justice, 184, and of mercy, *ib.*

2. By misunderstanding of sin; and from undervaluing the nature of sin in general, he quickly passes into a cursed extenuation of particulars, 185.

3. By mistakes about the spiritual rigour and strictness of the gospel, which he looks upon to be all mercy without justice, 186. Several texts instanced, which he first misunderstands, and then draws to his own purpose, 187.

4. By his mistakes about repentance, 188, conversion, 189, and faith, *ib.* Whence a caution is given to such as think they stand, to "beware lest they fall," and still to fear, that hope is scarce sure enough, that can never be too sure, 190, 191.

III. Showing how the hypocrite continues and preserves his hopes. Three ways particularly instanced.

1. By keeping up a course of external obedience, and abstaining from gross, scandalous sins, 193.

2. By comparing himself with others, who are openly vicious and apparently worse than himself, 195.

3. By forbearing to make a strict and impartial trial of his estate, 196.

Second proposition. That the hypocrite's fairest expectation of a future happiness will in the end vanish into miserable disappointment, 197. For the prosecution of which,

I. The proposition itself is proved, 1. From scripture, 197. 2. From the weakness of the foundation upon which his hope is built, 199.

II. Those critical seasons are shown, in which more especially his hope will be sure to fail him. As 1. In the time of some heart-breaking, discouraging judgment from God, 200. 2. At the time of death, 201.

III. An application is made of the whole discourse, by displaying the transcendent misery of the final estate of all hypocrites, 202—204.

## SERMONS XV. XVI.

### THE DUTY OF RESIGNATION.

#### PSALM XXXIX. 9.

*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.*

All the duties of a Christian are reducible to these three, faith, obedience, and patience: and the vital principle that animates them all is submission. This great virtue is here recommended to us by a great pattern, 205.

In the text are these two general parts:

1. David's submissive deportment under a sharp affliction.

2. The reason of such his deportment; which was the procedure of that affliction from God, 206.

The words being a full lecture of patience, and designed to argue us into an absolute submission to the divine will in our most severe distresses, are prosecuted in two things.

I. In declaring the nature and measures of this submission. This is done,

1. Negatively, by showing that it does not consist in an utter insensibility of, or unconcernment under an affliction: for he who is so insensible, 1. Robs God of that honour he designs to himself from that afflicting dispensation, 206. And, 2. Renders every affliction befalling him utterly useless to all spiritual purposes, 207. Nor,

Secondly, Does this submission restrain us from praying against any calamity inflicted or approaching, 207. Or,

Thirdly, Exclude our endeavours to prevent or remove an affliction, 208.

2. Positively, by showing what this submission is; namely, a quiet composure of the whole man under any calamity, distress, or injury; and requires,

(1.) A submission of the understanding to God, 209.

(2.) A perfect acquiescence of the will, and resignation of it to God's will, 210.

(3.) A composure or serenity in our passions and affections, 211.

(4.) A suppressing of all hard and discontented speeches, 212.

(5.) A restraint of all rage and revenge against such as are the instruments of God, 214.

By way of deduction are inferred three things.

1. The worth and excellency of such a submissive, composed frame of spirit, 216.

2. The difficulty of attaining to it: which appears, (1.) From that opposition which a man is to conquer, 218. (2.) From that mean opinion which the generality of men have of such a temper, *ib.*

3. The necessity of an early and long endeavour after it, 219.

II. In showing the reasons and arguments for this submission, as the suffering person stands related to God, 222.

Every thought which a man can possibly conceive, either of God or of himself, aright, will strongly enforce this duty: but six things in God are particularly instanced for this purpose.

1. His irresistible power, 223.

2. His absolute, unquestionable dominion and sovereignty over all things, 224.

3. His infinite and unfailing wisdom, 225.

4. His great goodness, benignity, and mercy to all his creatures, 227.

5. His exact and inviolable justice, 229.

6. His gracious way of treating all patient and humble sufferers, by turning every thing to their advantage at last, 229, 230.

This submission has three noble qualities, as it stands related to the foregoing considerations: 1. The necessity, 231; 2. The prudence, 232; 3. The decency of it, 234.

The foregoing discourse may teach us an art that all the wisdom of the world cannot teach; which is, by acquiescing cheerfully and entirely in the good pleasure of Almighty God, to make ourselves happy in the most afflicted, abject, and forlorn condition of life, 235, 236.

## SERMONS XVII—XX.

### CHRISTIANS EXHORTED TO LIVE PEACEABLY.

#### ROMANS XII. 18.

*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

Christianity the last and most correct edition of the law of nature: every precept of it may be resolved into a natural reason; as advancing and improving nature in the higher degrees and grander concerns of it. Christianity takes care for man, not only in his religious capacity, but also in his civil and political, binding the bonds of government faster, by the happy provisions of peace, 237.

The words of the text are discussed under four particulars.

I. The showing what is implied in the duty here enjoined.

II. What are the measures and proportions by which it is to be determined.

III. What are the means by which it is to be determined.

IV. What are the motives by which it may be enforced.

I. The duty here enjoined is, "live peaceably;" which may be taken,

1. For the actual enjoyment of peace with all men: and so he only lives peaceably, whom no man molests. But this cannot be the sense intended here, (1.) Because so to live peaceably is impossible, 1. From the contentious

unreasonable humour of many men, 238. 2. From the contrary and inconsistent interests of many men, 239. (2.) Because, though it were not impossible, it can be no man's duty, 240.

2. For a peaceable behaviour towards all men; which is the duty here enjoined; it seems adequately to consist of two things,

(1.) A forbearance of all hostile actions; and that in a double respect.

1. In a way of prevention, 241. 2. Of retaliation, 242.

(2.) A forbearance of injurious, provoking words, 244.

II. The measures and proportions by which it is to be determined, are expressed in these words: "If it be possible," 245.

Now *possible* may be taken two ways. 1. As it is opposed to naturally impossible, and that which cannot be done. 2. As opposed to morally impossible, and that which cannot be done lawfully, 245.

But the observance of peace being limited by the measure of lawful, all inquiries concerning the breaking of it are reducible to these two:

1. Whether it be at all lawful.

2. Supposing it lawful, when and where it ought to be judged so, 245.

Under the first is discussed that great question, whether war can be lawful for Christians, 245.

War is of two distinct kinds. 1. Defensive, in order to keep off and repel an evil designed to the public. 2. Offensive, for revenging a public injury done to a community. And it is allowable upon the strength of these arguments.

(1.) As it (the defensive) is properly an act of self-preservation, 246.

(2.) As it (the offensive) is a proper act of retributive justice, 247.

(3.) Because St. John the Baptist, Christ himself, and the apostles, judged the employment of a soldier lawful, 248.

The ground of the Socinians' arguments in this case, viz., that God, under the Mosaic covenant, promised only temporal possessions to his people, therefore war was lawful to them; but now, under the covenant of grace through Christ, has made no promise of temporal enjoyments, but on the contrary bids us to despise them, and therefore has taken from us all right of war and resistance. This argument examined and confuted, 249—252. And,

The scripture produced by those who abet the utter unlawfulness of war, examined and explained. As,

1. Matt. v. 39; Rom. xii. 17, 19, 252, 253.

2. Isaiah ii. 4, 254.

3. Matt. xxvi. 52, 255.

4. James iv. 1, 256.

Under the second inquiry, supposing it lawful, when and where it ought to be judged so.

First, Some general grounds that may authorize war are laid down. As when those with whom we are at peace,

1. Declare that they will annoy us, unless we cut off our limbs, &c., and upon our refusal disturb us.

2. Declare war with us, unless we will renounce our religion, 257.

3. Injure us to that degree as a nation, as to blast our honour and reputation.

4. Declare war with us, unless we will quit our civil rights, &c., 258.

Secondly, Some particular cases are resolved; as,

1st Case. Whether it be lawful for subjects in any case to make war upon the magistrate, 258.

Grotius's seven cases, wherein he asserts it to be lawful, 259, 260.

David Pareus's arguments, in a set and long dispute upon Rom. xiii. examined and answered, 261—264.

2nd Case. Whether it be lawful for one private man to make war upon another, in those encounters which we commonly call duels, 264. And here are set down,

1st. The cases in which a duel is lawful. As (1.) When two malefactors, condemned to die, are appointed by the magistrate to fight, upon promise

of life to the conqueror, 264. (2.) When two armies are drawn out, and the decision of the battle is cast upon a single combat, *ib.* (3.) When one challenges another, and resolves to kill him, unless he accepts the combat, 265.

2dly. The cases in which duels are utterly unlawful. As (1.) When they are undertaken for vain ostentation, 266. (2.) To purge one's self from some crime objected, *ib.* (3.) When two agree upon a duel, for the decision of right, mutually claimed by both, agreeing that the right shall fall to the conqueror, 267. (4.) When undertaken for revenge, or some injury done, or affront passed, *ib.*

But other arguments there are against duels, besides their unlawfulness. As, 1. The judgment of men generally condemning them, 269.

2. The wretched consequences of the thing itself; which are twofold, 1. Such as attend the conquered person, viz., (1.) A disastrous death, 269 (2.) Death eternal, 270. 2. Such as attend the conqueror. (1.) In case he is apprehended. (2.) Supposing he escapes by flight. (3.) Supposing by the intercession of great friends he has outraved justice, and triumphed over the law by a full acquittal, 271.

3rd Case. Whether it be lawful to repel force by force, so as to kill another in one's own defence, 273.

If a man has no other means to escape, it is lawful upon two reasons.

1. The great natural right of self-preservation, 273. 2. From that place where Christ commands his disciples to provide themselves swords, 274. Add to this the suffrage of the civil law.

Yet so to assert the privilege, as to take off the danger, it is stated under its due limitations by three inquiries.

1st. What those things are which may be thus defended; namely, 1. Life, 274. 2. Limbs, 275. 3. Chastity invaded by force, *ib.* 4. Estate or goods; which case admitting of some more doubt than the others, the opinions for the negative are stated and answered, 276—278.

Whatsoever a man may thus do for himself, the same also is lawful for him to do in the same danger and extremity of his neighbour, 278.

2dly. What are the conditions required to render such a defence lawful; which are these, 1. That the violence be so apparent, great, and pressing, that there can be no other means of escape, 279. 2. That there be no possibility of recourse to a magistrate for a legal protection, 280. 3. That a man design only his own defence, without any hatred or bitter purpose of revenge, *ib.*

3dly. Who are the persons against whom we may thus defend ourselves, 281.

4th Case. Whether it be allowable for Christians to prosecute and go to law with one another.

1. The arguments brought against it are examined: which seem principally to bear upon two scriptures: (1.) Matt. v. 40. (2.) 1 Cor. vi. 7. The arguments against going to law being drawn from the letter of these scriptures, they are examined and explained according to the sense of them, 282—286. (3.) The strict command that lies upon Christians to forgive injuries, 286. Here prosecutions are distinguished as they concern restitution or punishment, and going to law with regard to the first of these shown to be just and allowable, 287.

The arguments for the proof of the assertion are next considered. Which are,

1. That it is to endeavour the execution of justice in the proper acts of it between man and man, 287.

2. That if Christian religion prohibits law, observance of this religion draws after it the utter dissolution of all government, 288.

The limitations of law-contentions are three:

1. That a man takes not this course, but upon a very great and urgent cause.

2. That he be willing to agree upon any tolerable and just terms, rather than to proceed to a suit.

3. Supposing great cause, and no satisfaction, that he manage his suit by the rule of charity, and not of revenge, 290.



III. The means by which the duty of living peaceably is to be effected are,

1. A suppression of all distasteful, aggravating apprehensions of any ill turn or unkind behaviour from men, 292.

2. The forbearing all pragmatistical or malicious informations against those with whom we converse, 296.

3. That men would be willing in some cases to wave the prosecution of their rights, and not too rigorously to insist upon them, 300. As (1.) When the recovery of it seems impossible, 301. (2.) When it is but inconsiderable, but the recovery troublesome and contentious, 302. (3.) When a recompence is offered, *ib.*

4. To reflect upon the example of Christ, and the strict injunction lying upon us to follow it, 304.

5. Not to adhere too strictly to our own judgment of things doubtful in themselves, 305.

IV. The motives and arguments to enforce this duty are,

1. The excellency of the thing itself, 306.

2. The excellency of the principle from which peaceableness of spirit proceeds, 307.

3. The blessing entailed upon it by promise, Matt. v., 308.

Two instances of this blessing, that certainly attend the peaceable in this world. (1.) An easy, undisturbed, and quiet enjoyment of themselves, 308. (2.) Honour and reputation, which such a temper of mind fixes upon their persons, 309. Their report survives them, and their memory is blessed. Their name is glorified upon earth, and their souls in heaven, *ib.*

## SERMON XXI.

DEATH THE WAGES OF SIN.

ROMANS VI. 23.

*The wages of sin is death.*

A discourse of sin not superfluous, while the commission of it is continual, and yet the preventing necessary.

The design of the words prosecuted in discussing three things,

I. Showing what sin is, 310. As it is usually divided into two sorts:

1. Original sin, 311.

2. Actual sin, 312. Which is considered two ways,

(1.) According to the subject matter of it: as, 1. The sin of our words, 312.

2. Of our external actions, 313. 3. Of our desires, *ib.*

(2.) According to the degree or measure of it. As, 1. When a man is engaged in a sinful course by surprise and infirmity, 313. 2. Against the reluctancies of an awakened conscience, 314. 3. In defiance to conscience, *ib.*

II. Showing what is comprised in death, which is here allotted for the sinner's wages. And,

1. For death temporal, 315.

2. Death eternal, 316. Which has other properties, besides its eternity, to increase the horror of it. As (1.) It bereaves a man of all the pleasures and comforts which he enjoyed in this world, 315. (2.) Of that inexpressible good, the beatific fruition of God, *ib.* (3.) As it fills both body and soul with the highest torment and anguish that can be received within a finite capacity, 318.

III. Showing, in what respect death is properly called "the wages of sin."

1. Because the payment of wages still presupposes service and labour, 318.

2. Because wages do always imply a merit in the work, requiring such a compensation, 320.

Now sin is a direct stroke, 1st, At God's sovereignty; 2dly, At his very being, 321.

Having thus shown what sin is, and what death is, the certain, inevitable wages of sin; he who likes the wages, let him go about the work, 322.

## SERMON XXII.

HEAVEN PROMISED TO THE PURE IN HEART.

MATTHEW v. 8.

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

It may at first seem wonderful, that there are so few men in the world happy, when happiness is so freely offered: but this wonder vanishes upon considering the preposterous ways of men's acting, who passionately pursue the end, and yet overlook the means: many perishing eternally, because they cannot eat, drink, sleep, and play themselves into salvation. But this great sermon of our Saviour teaches us much other things, being fraught with the most sublime and absolute morality ever vented in the world, 323. An eminent instance whereof we have in the text, which is discussed under four heads.

I. Showing what it is to be "pure in heart."

Purity in general cannot be better explained than by its opposition, 1. To mixture, 324; 2. To pollution, 325.

Purity in heart is shown, 1. By way of negation; that it does not consist in the external exercise of religion, 325. There being many other reasons for the outward piety of man's behaviour. As, (1.) A virtuous and strict education, 327. (2.) The circumstances and occasions of his life, 327. (3.) The care and tenderness of his honour, *ib.*

2. Positively, wherein it does consist, viz., in an inward change and renovation of the heart, by the infusion of such a principle as naturally suits and complies with whatsoever is pure, holy, and commanded by God, 329. Which more especially manifests itself, (1.) In the purity and untainted sanctity of the thoughts, 329. (2.) In a sanctified regulation of the desires, 330. (3.) In a fearful and solicitous avoiding of every thing that may tend to sully or defile it, 331.

II. Explaining what it is to "see God"

Some disputes of the schools concerning this, 332, 333.

Our enjoyment of God is expressed by seeing him; because the sense of seeing, (1.) Represents the object with greater clearness and evidence than any of the other senses, 333; (2.) Is most universally exercised and employed, *ib.* (3.) Is the sense of pleasure and delight, 334; (4.) Is the most comprehensive and insatiable, *ib.*

III. Showing how this purity fits and qualifies the soul for the sight of God; namely, by causing a suitableness between God and the soul, 335.

Now during the soul's impurity, God is utterly unsuitable to it in a double respect.

1. Of the great unlikeness; 2. Of the great contrariety there is betwixt them, 335.

IV The brief use and application is, to correct our too great easiness and credulity in judging of the spiritual estate either of ourselves or others. If we would prevent the judgment of God, we must imitate it, judging of ourselves, as he will judge of us: for he who has outward purity only, without a thorough renovation within him, and a sanctified disposition of heart, may indeed hereafter see God, but then he is like to see him only as his judge, 336, 337.

## SERMON XXIII.

SELF-DENIAL THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS.

GAL. v. 24.

*And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*

As all sects and institutions have their distinguishing badge, or characteristic name; that of Christianity is comprised in the crucifixion of the flesh, and the lusts thereof, 338.

This explained by showing :

1. What is meant by being Christ's : it consists in accepting of, and having an interest in Christ, as he is offered and proposed in the gospel, under three offices, his prophetic, his kingly, and his sacerdotal, 338.

2. What is meant by the flesh, and the affections and lusts : by the former we are to understand, the whole entire body of sin and corruption, the inbred proneness in our nature to all evil : by the latter, the drawing forth of that propensity or principle into the several commissions of sin, through the course of our lives, 339.

The text further prosecuted in showing two things :

I. Why this vitiosity and corrupt habit of nature comes to have this denomination of "flesh;" and that for three reasons :

1. Because of its situation and place, which is principally in the flesh ; concupiscence, which is the radix of all sin, following the crisis and temperature of the body, 340.

2. Because of its close, inseparable nearness to the soul ; being, as it were, ingrafted into it, and thereby made connatural to it, 342.

3. Because of its dearness to us ; there being nothing we prosecute with a more affectionate tenderness than our bodies ; and sin being our darling, the queen-regent of our affections, 344.

Hence is inferred :

1. The deplorable estate of fallen man, 345.

2. The great difficulty of the duty of mortification, 345.

3. The mean and sordid employment of every sinner, 346.

II. What is imported by the crucifixion of the flesh : under which is shown :

1. What is the reason of the use of it in this place. It is used by way of allusion to Christ, of whose behaviour and sufferings every Christian is to be a living copy and representation, 347.

2. The full force and significancy of the expression. It imports four things : (1.) The death of sin, 348. (2.) Its violent death, 349. (3.) Its painful, bitter, and vexatious death, 350. (4.) Its shameful and cursed death, 351.

3. Some means prescribed for the enabling us to the performance of this duty : viz.,

(1.) A constant and pertinacious denying our affections and lusts in all their cravings for satisfaction, 352.

(2.) The encountering them by actions of the opposite virtues, 353.

4. What may be drawn, by way of consequence and deduction, from what has been delivered : and,

(1.) We collect the high concernment and absolute necessity of every man's crucifying his carnal, worldly affections, because without it he cannot be a Christian, 353.

(2.) We gather a standing and infallible criterion, to distinguish those that are not Christ's from those that are, 354.

An objection, that it is a hard and discouraging assertion, that none should be reputed Christ's, unless he has fully crucified and destroyed his sin, answered by explaining the doctrine to mean an active resolution against sin, 354, 355.

## SERMON XXIV.

[Preached January 30th.]

A CURSE DENOUNCED AGAINST BLOODSHED.

HABAKKUK II. 12.

*Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood !*

A short account being given of this whole prophecy, which foretells the great event of the Babylonish captivity, 356, 357 ; the words of the text are prosecuted in five particulars.

I. The ground and cause of this woe or curse; which was the justly abhorred sin of blood-guiltiness, 357.

II. The condition of the person against whom this curse is denounced: he was such a one as had actually established a government and built a city with blood, 359.

III. The latitude and extent of this woe or curse; which includes the miseries of both worlds, present and future: and, to go no further than the present, is made up of the following ingredients.

1. A general hatred and detestation fastened upon such men's persons, 361.

2. The torment of continual jealousy and suspicion, 362.

3. The shortness and certain dissolution of the government that he endeavours so to establish, 362.

4. The sad and dismal end that usually attends such persons, 363.

IV. The reasons why a curse or woe is so peculiarly denounced against this sin. Among many, these are produced:

1. Because the sin of bloodshed makes the most direct breach upon human society, of which the providence of God owns the peculiar care and protection, 364.

2. For the malignity of those sins that almost always go in conjunction with it; particularly the sins of fraud, deceitfulness, and hypocrisy, 365.

V. An application of all to this present occasion, 366, by showing how close and home the subject-matter of the text comes to the business of this annual solemnity.

1. In the charge of unjust effusion of blood, considered, 1. As public, and acted by and upon a community, as in war, 367; or 2. Personal, in the assassination of any particular man, 368.

2. In the end or design for which it was shed: namely, the erecting and setting up of a government, 368.

3. In the woe or curse denounced, which is shown to have befallen these bloody builders. 1. In the shortness of the government so set up. 2. In the general hatred that followed their persons, 369, 370.

## SERMON XXV.

### THE DESIGN OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION.

1 JOHN III. 8.

*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

This divine apostle endeavours to give the world a right information about this so great and concerning affair in this chapter, and particularly in these words; wherein we have,

I. An account of Christ's coming into the world, in this expression, "the Son of God was manifested." Which term, though it principally relates to the actual coming of Christ into the world, yet is of a larger comprehension, and leads to an enumeration and consideration of passages before and after his nativity, 371.

II. The end and design of his coming, which was to "destroy the works of the devil." In the prosecution of which is shown,

1. What were those works of the devil, that the Son of God destroyed, 373, and these works are reduced to three. (1.) Delusion, his first art of ruining mankind; which is displayed by a survey of the world lying under gentilism, in their principles of speculation and practice, 374. (2.) Sin. As the devil deceived men only to make them sinful, some account is given of his success herein, 376. (3.) Death: the inseparable concomitant of the former, 378.

2. The ways and means by which he destroys them. Now as the works of the devil were three, so Christ encounters them by those three distinct offices belonging to him as mediator. (1.) As a prophet, he destroys and removes that delusion that had possessed the world, by those divine and saving discoveries

of truth, exhibited in the doctrine and religion promulged by him, 379. (2.) As a priest, he destroyed sin by that satisfaction that he paid down for it, and by that supply of grace that he purchased, for the conquering and rooting it out of the hearts of believers, 380. (3.) As a king he destroys death by his power: for it is he that has "the keys of life and death, opening where none shuts, and shutting where none opens," 380, 381.

## SERMON XXVI.

THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN TO JERUSALEM.

MATTHEW II. 3.

*And when Herod the king heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.*

It having been the method of divine Providence, to point out extraordinary events and passages with some peculiar characters of remark; such as may alarm the minds and engage the eyes of the world, in a more exact observance of, and attention to the hand of God in such great changes; no event was ever ushered in with such notable prodigies and circumstances, as the nativity of our blessed Saviour, 382, 383. Some of them the apostle recounts in this chapter; which may be reduced to these two heads.

I. The solemn address and homage made to him by the wise men of the east. Under which passage these particulars are considered.

1. Who and what these wise men were, 383.
2. The place from whence they came, 385.
3. About what time they came to Jerusalem, 386.
4. What that star was, that appeared to them, 387.
5. How they could collect our Saviour's birth by that star, 388.

II. Herod's behaviour thereupon, 389. Herod is discoursed of,  
1. In respect of his condition and temper, in reference to his government of Judea; which are marked out by three things recorded of him, both in sacred and profane story. (1.) His usurpation, 390. (2.) His cruelty, *ib.* (3.) His magnificence, 391.

2. In respect of his behaviour and deportment, upon this particular occasion, which shows itself, (1.) In that trouble and anxiety of mind that he conceived upon this news. (2.) In that wretched course he took, to secure himself against his supposed competitor, 392.

3. In respect of the influence this his behaviour had upon those under his government, 393.

The question, Why Christ, being born the right and lawful king of the Jews, yet gave way to this bloody usurper, and did not assume the government to himself, answered.

1. Because his assuming it would have crossed the very design of that religion that he was then about to establish, which was to unite both Jew and Gentile into one church or body.

2. Christ voluntarily waved the Jewish crown, that he might hereby declare to the world the nature of his proper kingdom; which was, to be wholly without the grandeur of human sovereignty, and the splendour of earthly courts, 393, 394.

## SERMON XXVII.

CHRIST WORTHY OF OUR HIGHEST ESTEEM.

MATTHEW X. 37.

*He that loves father or mother better than me is not worthy of me.*

Our Saviour here presents himself and the world together, as competitors for our best affections, challenging a transcendent affection on our parts, because of a transcendent worthiness on his, 395.

By "father and mother" are to be understood whatsoever enjoyments are dear unto us, 395, and from the next expression, "he is not worthy of me," the doctrine of merit must not be asserted: because there is a twofold worthiness. 1. According to the real inherent value of the thing; and so no man by his choicest epdeavours can be said to be worthy of Christ. 2. When a thing is worthy, not for any value in itself, but because God freely accepts it as such, 396.

This being premised, the sense of the words is prosecuted in three particulars.

I. In showing what is included and comprehended in that love to Christ here mentioned.

It may include five things. 1. An esteem and valuation of Christ above all worldly enjoyments whatsoever, 396. 2. A choosing him before all other enjoyments, 397. 3. Service and obedience to him, 398. 4. Acting for him in opposition to all other things, 400. 5. It imports a full acquiescence in him alone, even in the absence and want of all other felicities, 401.

II. In showing the reason and motives that may induce us to this love.

1. He is the best able to reward our love, 404.

2. He has shown the greatest love to us, 406, and obliges us with two of the highest instances of it. (1.) He died for us, 407. (2.) He died for us while we were enemies, and, in the phrase of scripture, enmity itself against him, 408.

III. In showing the signs and characters whereby we may discern his love,

1. A frequent and indeed a continual thinking of him, 409.

2. A willingness to leave the world, whensoever God shall think fit, by death, to summon us to a nearer converse with Christ, 410.

3. A zeal for his honour, and impatience to hear or see any indignity offered him, 410—412.

## SERMONS XXVIII.—XXX.

### THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST A MOTIVE TO CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER.

#### EPHESIANS III. 12.

*In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*

Prayer is to be exercised with the greatest caution and exactness, being the most solemn intercourse earth can have with heaven. The distance between God and us, so great by nature and yet greater by sin, makes it fearful to address him: but Christ has smoothed a way; and we are commanded to come with a good heart, not only in respect of innocence, but also of confidence, 413.

The words prosecuted in the discussion of four things.

I. That there is a certain boldness and confidence, very well becoming of our humblest addresses to God, 414.

This is evident; for it is the very language of prayer to treat God with the appellation of father. The nature of this confidence is not so easily set forth by positive description, as by the opposition that it bears to its extremes; which are of two sorts.

1. In defect. This confidence is herein opposed, 1. To desperation and horror of conscience, 414. 2. To doubtings and groundless scrupulosities, 415. Some of these stated and answered, 415, 416.

2. In excess. Herein confidence is opposed, (1.) To rashness and precipitation, 417. (2.) To impudence or irreverence, which may show itself many ways in prayer, but more especially, 1st. By using of saucy familiar expressions to God, 418; or, 2dly. In venting crude, sudden, extemporary conceptions before God, 420.

II. Is shown, that the foundation of this confidence is laid in the mediation of Christ, 421, which is yet more evidently set forth,

III. In showing the reason why Christ's mediation ought to minister such confidence to us: which is, the incomparable fitness of Christ for the performance of that work, 423; and this appears by considering him,

1. In respect of God, with whom he is to mediate. God in this business sustains a double capacity, (1.) Of a father; and there cannot be a more promising ground of success in all Christ's pleas for us, 423. (2.) Of a judge; now Christ appears for us, not only as an advocate, but as a surety, paying down to God on our behalf the very utmost that his justice can expect, 424; and besides God himself appointed him to this work, 425.

2. In reference to men, for whom he mediates. He bears a fourfold relation to them. (1.) Of a friend, 426. (2.) Of a brother, *ib.* (3.) Of a surety, 427. (4.) Of a lord or master, 428.

3. In respect of himself, who performs the office. (1.) He is perfectly acquainted with all our wants and necessities, 429. (2.) He is heartily sensible of, and concerned about them, 430. (3.) He is best able to express and set them before the Father, 431.

IV. Whether there is any other ground that may rationally embolden us in these our addresses to him, 432.

If there is, it must be either, 1. Something within: as the merit of our good actions. But this cannot be, (1.) Because none can merit, but by doing something absolutely by his own power for the advantage of him from whom he merits, 432. (2.) Because to merit is to do something over and above what is due, 433. It must then be,

2. Something without us: and this must be the help and intercession either, (1.) Of angels, or (2.) Of saints, 433.

Angels cannot mediate for us, and present our prayers. 1. Because it is impossible for them to know and discern the thoughts, 433. 2. Because no angel can know at once all the prayers that are even uttered in words throughout the world, *ib.*

The arguments some bring for the knowledge of angels, partly upon scripture, 434, and partly upon reason, 436, examined and answered, 436, 437.

The foregoing arguments against angels proceed more forcibly against the intercession of saints: to which there may be added over and above, 1. That God sometimes takes his saints out of the world, that they may not know and see what happens in the world, 437. 2. We have an express declaration of their ignorance of the state of things below in Isaiah lxiii. 16, 438.

The Romish arguments, from scripture, Luke xxi., and from reason, stated and answered, 438—440.

The invocation of saints supposed to arise, 1. From the solemn meetings, used by the primitive Christians, at the saints' sepulchres, and there celebrating the memory of their martyrdom. 2. From those seeds of the Platonic philosophy, that so much leavened many of the primitive Christians, 440. 3. From the people's being bred in idolatry, 441. But the primitive fathers held no such thing; and the council of Trent, that pretended to determine the case, put the world off with an ambiguity, *ib.*

Conclusion, that Christ is the only true way; the way that has light to direct, and life to reward them that walk in it; and consequently there is "no coming to the Father, but by him," 443.

## SERMON XXXI.

### THE DANGER OF RESISTING THE SPIRIT.

#### GENESIS VI. 3.

*And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man.*

God, in the first chapter, looks over all created beings, and pronounces them to be good; in this chapter he surveys the sons of men before the flood, and delivers his judgment, that they were exceeding wicked, nay totally corrupt

and depraved. But amidst those aboundings of wickedness, God left not himself without a witness in their hearts: they had many checks and calls from the Holy Spirit, which, by their resolution to persist in sin, they did at length totally extinguish. God withdraws his Spirit, and the strivings of it; and presently the flood breaks in upon them, to their utter perdition, 444.

The words afford several observations; as first, from the method God took in this judgment, first withdrawing his Spirit, and then introducing the flood, we may observe,

1. D. That God's taking away his Spirit from any soul, is the certain fore-runner of the ruin of that soul.

2. From that expression of the "Spirit's striving with man," we may observe,

2. D. That there is in the heart of man a natural enmity and opposition to the motions of God's Holy Spirit.

3. From the same expression we may observe,

3. D. That the Spirit, in its dealings with the heart, is very earnest and vehement.

From the definite sentence God here passes, we may observe,

4. D. That there is a set time, after which the convincing operations of God's Spirit upon the heart of man, in order to his conversion, being resisted, will cease and for ever leave him, 445.

This last doctrine, seeming to take in the chief scope of the Spirit in these words, is here prosecuted in four things.

I. In endeavouring to prove and demonstrate the truth of this assertion from scripture, 446.

That it is the way of God's dealings, still to withdraw his Spirit, after some notorious resistance, instanced from several scriptures. 1. From Psalm xcv. 10.

2. From Heb. iv. 7. 3. From Luke xix. 42. And from Gen. xv. 16, 446, 447.

Here note, that by a set time, is not to be understood a general set time, which is the same in every man; but a set and stinted time in respect of every particular man's life, in which there is some limited period, wherein the workings of the Spirit will for ever stop, 448.

II. In showing how many ways the Spirit may be resisted; that is, in every way which the Spirit takes to command and persuade the soul to the performance of duty and the avoidance of sin, 448. As,

1. Externally, by the letter of the word, either written or preached, it may be resisted, (1.) By a negligent hearing and a careless attendance upon it, 449, 450. (2.) By acting in a clear and open contrariety to it, 450. And this last kind of resisting is great and open rebellion. 1. Because action is the very perfection and consummation of sin. 2. Because sin in the actions argues an overflowing and a redundancy of sin in the heart, 451.

2. By its immediate internal workings upon the soul. And here the Spirit may be resisted, (1.) In its illumination of the understanding: that is, its infusing a certain light into the mind, in some measure enabling it to discern and judge of the things of God, 452. Now this light is threefold. 1. That universal light usually termed the light of nature, 453. 2. A rational light of scripture; or a bare knowledge of, and assent to scriptural truths, *ib.* 3. A special convincing light, which is a higher degree, and may be resisted and totally extinguished, 454.

2. In its conviction of the will, 455. Now the convincing works of the Spirit upon the will, in all which it may be opposed, are, 1. A begetting in it some good desires, wishes, and inclinations, *ib.* 2. An enabling it to perform some imperfect obedience, 456. 3. An enabling it to forsake some sins, *ib.*

III. In showing the reasons why, upon such resistance, the Spirit finally withdraws.

1. Because it is decreed by God.

2. Because it is most agreeable to the great intent and design of the gospel, (1.) In converting and saving the elect, 460. (2.) In rendering reprobates inexcusable, 461.

3. Because it highly tends to the vindication of God's honour: (1.) As it is a punishment to the sinner, 463. (2.) As a vindication of his attributes, 1. Of



wisdom; 4. Of mercy, in showing it is no ways inferior, much less contrary to his holiness, 464, 465, and not repugnant to his justice, 465.

4. Because it naturally raises in the hearts of men an esteem and valuation of the Spirit's workings: (1.) An esteem of fear: (2.) An esteem of love, 466.

IV. In an application. We are exhorted not to quench the Spirit, but to cherish all his suggestions and instructions, 467. Because our resisting the Spirit will,

1. Certainly bereave us of his comforts, 468; which are, (1.) Giving a man to understand his interest in Christ, and consequently in the love of God, *ib.* (2.) Discovering to him that grace that is within him, 469.

2. It will bring a man under hardness of heart and a reprobate sense, by way, 1. Of natural causation; 2. Of a judicial curse from God, 469, 470.

3. It puts a man in the very next disposition to the great and unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost: and the foregoing acts, being like so many degrees and steps leading to this dreadful sin, which is only a greater kind of resistance of the Spirit, 470.

## SERMON XXXII.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SAVING AND A PHARISAICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS.

MATTHEW V. 20.

*For I say unto you, That unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Our blessed Saviour here shows, first, that eternal salvation cannot be attained by the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees; secondly, that it may be attained by such a one as does exceed it, 472.

For understanding the words it is explained,

First, That these scribes and pharisees amongst the Jews were such as owned themselves the strictest liver and best teachers in the world, 472

Secondly, That "righteousness" here has a twofold acceptance. 1. Righteousness of doctrine. 2. Righteousness in point of practice, 473

Thirdly, That "the kingdom of heaven" has three several significations in scripture. 1. It is taken for the Christian economy, opposed to the Jewish and Mosaic; 2. For the kingdom of grace; 3. For the kingdom of glory, 473, 474.

These things premised, the entire sense of the words lies in three propositions.

1st. That a righteousness is absolutely necessary to the attainment of salvation.

2dly. That every degree of righteousness is not sufficient to entitle the soul to eternal happiness.

3dly. That the righteousness that saves must far surpass the greatest righteousness of the most refined hypocrite in the world, 474

This proposition, virtually containing both the former, is the subject of the discourse, and prosecuted in three things.

I. Showing the defects of the hypocrites (here expressed by "the scribes and pharisees"), 475.

As 1. That it consisted chiefly in the external actions of duty, 475. 2. That it was but partial and imperfect, not extending itself equally to all God's commands, 476. 3. That it is legal, that is, such a one as expects to win heaven upon the strength of itself and its own worth, 478.

II. Showing the perfections and qualities by which the righteousness that saves transcends that of the hypocrites.

Among many, four are insisted upon. 1. That it is entirely the same whether the eye of man see it or not, 480. 2. That it is an active watching against and opposing every even the least sin, 482. 3. That it is such a one as always aspires and presses forward to still a higher and a higher perfection, 484. 4. The fourth and certainly distinguishing property of its humility, 485.

III. Showing the necessity of such a righteousness in order to a man's salvation. Which arises,

1. From the holiness of God, 486.

2. From the work and employment of a glorified person in heaven; and no person, whom the grace of God has not thoroughly renewed and sanctified, can be fit for such a task: for it is righteousness alone, that must both bring men to heaven, and make heaven itself a place of happiness to those that are brought thither, 487.

### SERMON XXXIII.

ON THE MARTYRDOM OF KING CHARLES I.

JUDGES XIX. 30.

*And it was so, that all that saw it, said, There was no such deed done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds.*

These words were occasioned by a foul and detestable fact, which, for want of kingly government, happened in one of the tribes of Israel: but may be applied to express the murder of King Charles the First, 491, 492. The unparalleled strangeness of which deed will appear, if we consider,

I. The qualities, human accomplishments, and personal virtues of the person murdered, 493.

II. The gradual preparations to such a murder, a factious ministry and a covenant, 496, and their rebellious catechism, 497.

III. The actors in this tragical scene, 498.

IV. Their manner of procedure in it, 439, openly, *ib.*, cruelly, 500, and with pretences of conscience, and protestations of religion, 501, 502.

V. The fatal consequences of it, 503, such as were of a civil, *ib.*, or a religious concern, *ib.*

Lastly, Hereupon we ought to take advice, 505, and consider, that our sins have been the cause of our calamities; and that the best way to avoid the same evil is to sin no more, 506.

### SERMON XXXIV.

ECCLESIASTICAL CONSTITUTIONS TO BE MAINTAINED.

GALATIANS II. 5.

*To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*

From the way of St. Paul's dealing with the schismatics of his time, a pattern may be drawn, how to deal with our dissenters, viz, not to yield up the least lawful received constitution of our church to their demands or pretences, though never so urging and importunate, 507—509. The prosecution of which assertion shall be managed by considering,

I. The pretences alleged by dissenters against our church's ceremonies, 510. As,

1. The unlawfulness of those ceremonies, 512.

2. Their inexpediency, 513.

3. Their smallness, 514. Which three exceptions are confuted severally.

II. The consequences of yielding or giving them up, 515. Which will appear very dangerous, if we observe,

1. The temper and disposition of those men, who press for such a compliance, 515.

2. The effects of such a compliance heretofore, 516, and those which a comprehension is likely to produce for the future, 517, together with a discourse upon toleration, 518.

III. The good and great influence of a strict adherence to the constitutions of our church, in procuring the settlement of it, and preserving the purity of the gospel amongst us, 520, because it is the most sovereign means,

1. To preserve unity in the church, 520.
2. To beget in the church's enemies an opinion of the requisiteness of those usages, 520.
3. To possess them with an awful esteem of the conscience of the governors of the church, 522.

Lastly, A brief recapitulation is made of all the forealleged reasons and arguments, why (according to St. Paul's example and dealing with the Judaizing Christians) we are by no means to give place in the least to our dissenters, 523—526.

## SERMON XXXV.

### THE CERTAINTY OF A FUTURE JUDGMENT.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS V. 10.

*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ: that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

Besides instruction and exhortation, there are only two ways, in the ordinary course of divine providence, by which man is wrought upon, viz., hope of reward, and fear of punishment. God having tried the former method towards this nation, but in vain, he is compelled to make use of the latter, by the terror of his judgments. If any thing will rouse from spiritual lethargy, it must be an apprehension of and meditation on the last judgment: therefore, although the words may be considered as matter of consolation to the righteous, they will on this occasion be handled in the severer sense, that of terror, 526—528. The intention in this sermon is,

I. To convince every man's conscience, that there shall be indeed such an appearance, or such a general trial or doom of all mankind after this life, as is here spoken of. This may be proved by the dictates of reason and the light of nature:

1. Because it is very agreeable to the nature of God, 529.
2. Because it is consonant to the nature of the soul of man, 530.
3. Because it is necessary for the manifestation of the divine justice, 530.
4. Because the disproportion between merits and rewards in this life seems to require such a judgment, 532.
5. Because there is an inbred notion in all men, that there will be such a judgment, 533—539.

II. To inquire what manner of thing this judgment or last doom will be. In the description of which we have,

1. The judge, 539.
2. The parties to be judged, 541.
3. The matters for which they will be tried, *ib.*
4. The form of the trial, *ib.*
5. The sentence and its execution, 541—543.

III. By way of application, to show how much all men are concerned in this judgment. If there be such a judgment to come, we may conclude,

1. That the greatest pretenders to wisdom are not the wisest men, 543, 544.
2. We may learn the folly of hypocrisy, 544. But there are others also who will receive as great a punishment as the hypocrites, viz., presumptuous and openly profane sinners.

To conclude: the best method we can take is to judge ourselves, and to make it part of our daily business to meditate, 1st. Upon the vanity and shortness of our lives. 2dly. Upon the certainty and uncertainty of our deaths. 3dly. Upon the exactness and severity of the judgment after death. 4thly. Upon the immutability of every man's condition in the other world.

# S E R M O N S.

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## SERMON I.

OBSTINATE SINNERS DOOMED TO ETERNAL PERDITION.

PSALM XCV. 11.

*Unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest.*

IN these words we have an account of the severest proceeding of an angry God against sinners. What Calvin says of reprobation, that it was *decretum horribile*, a dreadful amazing decree, the like may be here said of this sentence pronounced against Israel. For certainly, if such decrees are so terrible in the constitution of them, they cannot but appear much more terrible in the promulgation.

We have in the precedent verses a narrative of the Israelites' provoking sins, like a black cloud gathering over their heads, and here we have it breaking out into this dreadful thunder: a thunder much more dreadful than all those that sounded in their ears at the promulging of the law from mount Sinai; for if the terror of the Almighty was so great in giving the law, no wonder if it was much greater in pronouncing the curse.

The words in themselves seem very plain and easy; and by this expression, "I swear in my wrath," is meant God's peremptory declaring his resolution to destroy those murmuring and rebellious Jews. The word *swearing* is very significant, and seems to import these two things:

1st. The certainty of the sentence here pronounced. Every word of God both is and must be truth; but ratified by an oath, it is truth with an advantage. It is signed irrevocable. This **fixes** it like the laws of the Medes and Persians, beyond all possibility of alteration; and makes God's word, like his very nature, unchangeable.

2dly. It imports the terror of the sentence. If the children of Israel could say, "Let not God speak to us, lest we die," what would they have said had God then sworn against them? It is terrible to hear an oath from the mouth but of a poor mortal; but from the mouth of an omnipotent God, it does not only terrify, but confound. An oath from God is truth delivered in anger; truth, as I may so speak, with a vengeance. When God speaks, it is the creature's duty to hear; but when he swears, to tremble. As for the next expression, "that they should not enter into my rest," we must observe that the word *rest* may have a double interpretation.

1st. It may be taken for a temporal rest in Canaan, the promised land; or 2dly, for an eternal rest in the heavenly Canaan.

Concerning which, some, who interpret spiritual truths according to the model of their own carnal conceptions, will have the whole sense of these words to be no more than God's excluding that generation of the Jews that murmured from a temporal possession of the land of Canaan, by destroying them in the wilderness. But this does not reach the matter. For since the church of the Jews, as to the whole economy and design of it, was in every thing typical (so that it is observed by all writers, that there was no dispensation that befell them from God, in respect of any temporal blessing or curse, but it did signify and couch under it the same in spirituals): from the warrant of this rule, we must admit in this scripture, as well as in many others of the like nature, both of a literal and of a spiritual, or mystical sense. And,

1st. Considered according to the literal meaning of the words, as they are an historical passage relating to God's cutting off that murmuring generation of the Jews in the wilderness, set down in Numb. xiv. 21—23, so questionless they signify only God's denying them an entrance into the temporal Canaan. For to affirm, that all those that fell in the wilderness were excluded from heaven, would be both a harsh and an unwarrantable interpretation. But then,

2dly. Considered according to the spiritual or mystical sense of the words. So the meaning of them runs thus: as God in his fierce anger destroyed many of the children of Israel for their murmurings in the wilderness, and so denied them an entrance into the promised land of Canaan; so he will externally destroy all obstinate unbelievers, and for ever exclude them from an enjoyment of a perpetual rest with himself in heaven. This I pitch upon as the prime intendment and sense of the words, though not so as wholly to exclude the other; and I ground it upon the apostle's own interpretation of these words in Heb. iv. 5, compared with Heb. ix. 11, where he interprets this word "rest" of such a rest as a man may fall short of through

unbelief. But now unbelief does not so much exclude from a temporal, as from an eternal rest. He applies it also to the Jews, his contemporaries, living in the same age with himself; and those could not possibly be said to miss or fall short of the earthly Canaan, since they and their ancestors had possessed that long before. It is clear, therefore, that it is to be understood chiefly of the heavenly.

The words thus explained, I shall draw into this one proposition, viz.

That God sometimes in this life, upon extraordinary provocations, may and does inevitably design and seal up obstinate sinners to eternal destruction.

The prosecution of which I shall manage under these following particulars :

I. I shall show how and by what means God seals up a sinner to perdition.

II. What sort of obstinate sinners those are that God deals with in this manner.

III. I shall answer and resolve one or two questions that may arise from the foregoing particulars. And

IV. And lastly, draw some uses from the whole. Of these in their order.

I. And for the first of these. There are three ways by which God usually prepares and ripens a sinner for certain destruction.

1. By withholding the virtue and power of his ordinances : and when God seals up the influences of these conduits, no wonder if the soul withers and dies with drought. For, alas ! what is a conduit by which nothing is conveyed ! The ordinances of themselves can do nothing but as they are actuated and enlivened by a secret divine energy working in them. Now God, while he freely dispenses them, can suspend the other ; and as he can give rain, and yet deny fruitfulness, and even send famine with a harvest, so he can fix such a curse upon the means of grace, that a man may really want them while he enjoys them ; that is, he may want them in their force and power, while he enjoys them in the letter. As a man may eat and yet not be nourished ; for it is not the bread that nourishes, but the blessing. Thus the Israelites had leanness in their bones, together with their quails, the hidden nutritive power of the divine benediction being withheld. So in spirituals, a man may have an unthriving soul in the midst of the greatest evangelical provisions because unblest ; and in the midst of such plenty, suffer a real scarcity and famine.

The truth of this will appear from those different effects that are ascribed to the same word in scripture. For is not that which is "a savour of life" to some ; that is, to those that are within

the purpose of God's love, and whom he intends effectually to call, and to convert to himself: I say is not the same termed "a savour of death" to others? that is, to the obstinate and impenitent, and such as God leaves to themselves. That which God uses as an instrument to save, meeting with the corruption of some obdurate hearts, is made a means to ruin: as it softens some, so it hardens others. The chosen of God are qualified by it for glory; the reprobates prepared for wrath. So contrary are the workings of the same principle upon different subjects. As the same rain that, falling upon a tree or plant, makes it grow and flourish: falling upon wood cut down and dried, makes it rot and decay. By this means God does very powerfully fit the sons of perdition for their final sentence. For when men grow worse and worse by sermons and sacraments, and under the continual droppings of the word preached, produce nothing but the cursed fruits of sin; like "the earth, that, drinking in the rain that cometh often upon it, beareth nothing but briars and thorns;" what can be expected, but that, as they resemble the earth in its barrenness, so they should be like it also in its doom; which is, to be "nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned," Heb. vi. 8. The apostle draws a peremptory conclusion concerning this, in 2 Cor. iv. 3, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." When the word shall be exhibited to the soul, like a dark lantern, not to display, but to conceal the light; no wonder, if "seeing, we do not see," but wander through the darkness of a soul-destroying blindness, to such a darkness as is perpetual. God can order even his word and precepts so, and turn them to the destruction of the unprofitable, unworthy enjoyers of them, that, as it is in Isaiah xxviii. 13, "they shall go backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken." And certainly we have cause to conclude him, who receives no benefit at all by the word of life, a lost person. He, whom the very means of salvation do not save, must needs perish.

2. God seals and prepares a sinner for destruction, by restraining the convincing power of his providences. God's providences are subservient to his ordinances: they are, as it were, God's word acted and made visible to the eye. For God speaks, not only in his word, but also in his works. And, as Christ says of his miraculous, so we may say also of God's providential works; that "the works that he does, bear witness of him." There are such fresh marks and signatures of the divine will in the many occasional passages of our lives, that such as have their senses in any measure spiritually exercised, do not only see the hand, but also hear the voice of him that sent them. And it would not be difficult to draw forth sundry instances from history, showing how several persons have been converted by a serious reflection upon some strange passages of providence, that have so directly thwarted, and even melted them in their

sin, and withal carried with them such undeniable evidence of the divine displeasure, that the persons concerned have been forced to cry out, that it was the apparent finger of God; and so to submit to it by a conscientious reformation of their lives. Now I shall instance in three sorts of providence, in which God often speaks convincingly.

(1.) In a general common calamity. In respect of which it is said, that "when God's judgments are abroad in the land, the inhabitants will learn righteousness," Isaiah xxvi. 9. Now that which concerns all, concerns every particular; as in a general rain, every twig, every single spire of grass shares in the influence. Judgments that are general in the sending, are to be made particular by a distinct application. Thus Ezra and Nehemiah made the common desolation and captivity of the Jews the subject-matter of their personal sorrow. Thus also Jeremy, Lam. iii. 1, considers all the words and griefs that were diffused here and there in a common, universal calamity, and then makes them all centre in his own breast: "I am the man," says he, "that have seen affliction." And what is the whole book of the Lamentations, but the doleful expression of the sorrows of one man for the misery of all? The convincing sense of a calamity should spread wider a great deal than the actual endurance of it, and the terror proceed further than the smart. As the sunbeams, though directly and immediately they may strike only this or that thing, yet they are sure to reach many others in the rebound. But now, when God, as it were, blunts the edge of a common calamity, so that it makes no impression, or hardens the heart so that it admits none, this is a pregnant sign of a soul fitted and prepared for destruction. See the truth of this exemplified in one or two particulars. And first, could any thing be imagined more impious and absurd, than that which we read in 1 Sam. xv. of Agag, king of Amalek; that immediately upon the conquest of his kingdom, the slaughter of his subjects, and the captivity of his own person, like a man wholly unconcerned in all these distresses, he should venture to adorn and trick up himself, and conclude presently, that "surely the bitterness of death was past?" But behold, even then, in that very moment, sudden destruction rushes in upon him; which, by the way, is then usually nearest to our persons, when furthest from our thoughts. But, to proceed to a higher example of villany; could there be a more prodigious, horrid instance of incorrigible lewdness, than that in Numb. xxv. 6, of one Zimri, of whom it is said, that in the very midst and height of a plague from heaven, raging over the whole camp of Israel, "he brought into his tent the Midianitish strumpet in the sight of Moses, his prince, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who stood weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation?" Neither any touch of common humanity, upon the sight of his



brethren's mourning and misery, nor any awe and reverence of that great lawgiver, could give check to his fury; but that, in defiance of the plague, and of the wrath that sent it; in spite of all shame and scandal, and in the face of God and of the world, he charges on, resolutely and audaciously, to the satisfaction of his impure desires. But wheresoever we meet with such a rate of sinning, we may be sure destruction cannot be far off, but even at the door. And accordingly here in ver. 8, we find the vengeance of God overtaking this vile person, by a sudden and disastrous death; a death that carried away body and soul together. For when men are killed in their sin, *flagrante crimine*, death temporal is by consequence eternal. But now, had these two daring wretches duly and rightly considered these dreadful, public dispensations of God, they would quickly have reflected upon their own personal danger, and cried out with surprise and horror, as those sinners of Sion did upon the sight of God's judgments round about them, in Isaiah xxxiii. 14 "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" This, together with the fears of mature repentance, had been the only sure way to have extinguished them. But persons that will not be concerned, nor moved, nor wrought upon by the loud alarms of God's judgments upon others, are ripening apace for perdition.

(2.) The second sort of convincing providences is by particular, personal, and distinguishing judgments. When a man is singled out for misery, in the midst of a general prosperity, this surely cannot be accounted accident. When God hits one in a company you may very well conclude that he aimed at him. Distinction and discrimination was never yet the effect of chance. Now, in every such judgment the voice and command of God is, that we should either begin or renew our repentance. And when God speaks with his hand, certainly he speaks most forcibly. But when he binds up, and withholds the healing force of this also, and inflicts the rod, but denies jurisdiction; and uses that to kill, that was first made to correct; this is another speedy and effectual way to destroy.

Those many rubs and crosses that befell Saul, both in his persecution of David and his other affairs, were certainly the voice of God, audible enough to any spiritual ear: and though God answered him not by Urim and Thummim, yet he spoke aloud to him in vocal blows; which were both reprehensions of what he had done, and admonitions what, for the future, he should do. But we know, none of all these things had any effect upon him, unless only to make him worse. It appeared to be God's purpose, all along, by a continual increase of guilt and hardness, to train him up for destruction. The event did still demonstrate what God designed him to. The same judgments that in the hand of God are sovereign means to polish and improve a well-disposed

mind, are as efficaciously used by him to inflame the accounts of the wicked and the obdurate; who take occasion from thence to make themselves ten times more the sons of reprobation than they were before. As in bodies, those that are solid and excellent, as gold and silver, the more you beat them, the brighter and better they grow; but in flesh, that is presently subject to corrupt, the more you strike it, the blacker and nearer it is to putrefaction. See the desperate resolve that a wretched king of Israel made under a pressing judgment, incumbent upon him from God, in 2 Kings vi. 33: "And he said, Behold, this evil is of the Lord; why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" When a man, instead of being humbled by an evil, is enraged; and, instead of lying at God's feet, flies in his face; we may be sure that his final judgment and damnation lingers not. For if such works of God, as have in them naturally a convincing quality, do not actually convince; but that the sinner can account "all God's arrows as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of his spear;" we may look upon that man as one that hardens himself against God. And what will prove the issue of such a behaviour is not difficult to conclude, from that in Job ix. 4, that "none ever hardened himself against God, and prospered."

(3.) The third sort of providences, in which God often speaks convincingly, is by signal, unexpected deliverances. These are both the strongest and the sweetest ways of conviction: they are properly God's "drawing us with the cords of a man:" all persuasion, without any mixture of terror or compulsion; by these God does, as it were, allure, and even court us into subjection.

Now all deliverance, in the nature of it, presupposing some evil, from which we are delivered; God first brings us under an evil, that we may see our sin, and then rescues us from perishing by it, that we may repent. He shows us death in the punishment, to affright, and afterwards removes it in the deliverance, to endear the soul. And surely, upon all the accounts of reason and common humanity, it should be natural from hence to draw an argument for repentance. For to sin against mercy, shining in a deliverance, is disingenuous; and, since it provokes the judgment to return, equally dangerous. The most proper and genuine deduction that is to be made from God's mercy, is his fear, in Psalm cxxx. 4, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." But now, if any man, from a deliverance from punishment, shall draw a consequence for boldness in sin, and if, from compassion, he shall argue himself into presumption, this is not the discourse of his reason, but the sophistry and baseness of his corruption; and such a way of arguing as God reproached the children of Israel for, as equally wicked and irrational, in Jer. vii. 10, "Will ye stand before me, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?" For can we imagine, that the great and just God should concern himself

to deliver us, and to knock off our shackles, only that we may sin against him so much the more freely? When God has got the sinner upon the advantage, and is making him feel, in some measure, the evil of his sin, in the smart of his punishment, what is it that makes God, after all this, let him go, and choose rather to release than to despatch him? Is it because he could not destroy him in justice? or, because it would not stand with the reputation of his goodness? No, assuredly; it was wholly out of free, spontaneous, undeserved mercy, to see whether or no he will improve such an act of favour into a motive and occasion of amendment. But if, for all this, the sinner will not hear what God speaks in such a dealing; but shuts his eyes and stops his ears, and after so many endearments, loves God never the better, nor his sin at all the worse (as this frame of spirit often befalls sturdy, overgrown sinners), we may assuredly conclude, that God is taking another course with such a one; and fairly fitting him for the final stroke of his revenging justice.

And thus much for the second way, by which I show, that God seals and prepares a sinner for destruction; namely, by restraining the convincing force of his providences.

3. The third and last that I shall mention, is by delivering up the sinner to a stupidity, or searedness of conscience. And here it will be requisite to show what this searedness of conscience means: which I shall endeavour to explain from that place of scripture in 1 Tim. iv. 2, "Having their consciences seared with a hot iron;" *κεκαυτηριασμένων τὴν ἰδίαν συνείδησιν*. Where some, by a "seared conscience," understand a prostitute, branded, filthy conscience; alluding to such notorious criminals as are branded for their villanies: which, though it be in itself a truth, yet others, I think, more significantly, make it an allusion to the practice of surgeons and physicians, who use cuttings and burnings for the healing of corrupt flesh: which being once thus cauterized or seared, becomes afterwards insensible. And like such flesh are the consciences of some men; which are, as it were, seared into a kind of insensibility.

Now for the nature of conscience, we must know that it is God's vicegerent in the soul, placed there by him, as superintendent over all our actions, severely to examine and supervise them, and impartially to excuse or accuse, according to their conformity or inconformity to the rules prescribed by God's law. And it is, withal, naturally of the tenderest, the quickest, and the most exact sense of any of the faculties; impatient of the least irregularity, and not conniving at the smallest deviation from the rule a man ought to act by.

But now, when this becomes gross, stupid, and insensible, the soul may sin on as it pleases: for what can hinder sin from reigning, when conscience is hardened, and cannot so much as check it? If, when the watchman is but asleep, the city or

castle committed to him is in danger of a surprise from the enemy, how much more must it needs be so when he is blind! When there is a benumbedness, or searedness, upon the grand principle of spiritual sense, so that, as it is expressed in Eph. iv. 19, we come to be "past feeling," no wonder then if sin and Satan inflict blow after blow, in the most fatal manner, upon the soul: for this is most certain, that unless we feel the evil of sin, we shall never resist it. Such a conscience will brook and digest the foulest sins; as when a man has lost his taste, any thing will go down with him.

But still we must here note, that it is not at once, but by degrees, that the conscience comes to be trained on to this insensible, obdurate temper. As first, if a man's conscience will serve him to be worldly, from thence it shall allow him to proceed to ambition and covetousness; and then, following the scent of gain through thick and thin, he shall be able to mould and cast himself into any kind, even of the wickedest and the basest compliances; and from thence, at last, if need be, he shall not stick at perjury itself. And now, when conscience, by going this cursed round, is become hardy, and the man made an experienced, thorough-paced sinner; what sin will he not dare to commit? Any lie, any oath, any treachery, shall be readily swallowed and digested by him.

But how dangerous and even desperate, is such a frame of mind! and yet God sometimes delivers up sinners to it; as he did Pharaoh, to hardness of heart. But how? not by any positive infusion of such an evil habit into the conscience; but by subtracting his grace, as also providentially administering occasions, by which the sinner, thus deprived of grace, is more and more hardened. And further than this, I see not how any evil or sinful disposition in the creature can be said to be from God. It is sufficient that God effectually works his end upon sinners this way. As the sun is the cause of night and darkness, not by any casual influence producing it, but only by withdrawing his light; the corruption of a man's heart, unrenewed by grace, is the cause of its own hardness: as, when you melt wax, remove but the fire, and the wax will harden itself. But now, there is no way so sure and dreadful, by which God binds over a sinner to death, as this. For thus God dealt with the Jews: "He gave them eyes, that seeing, they might not perceive; and ears, that hearing, they might not understand: but made the heart of that people gross, that they might not be converted, and healed;" that is, that they might be hardened and ruined; as it is in Isaiah vi. 9, 10.

The same appears also from that opposite way that God takes to save. Because God had thoughts of mercy for king Josiah, therefore he gave him a tender heart, to relent, upon the hearing of the law, 2 Kings xxii. 19: "Because thine heart was

tender, &c., therefore have I heard thee, saith the Lord." This hardness growing upon the conscience, is like a film growing upon the eyes; it blinds them. And that which makes the conscience blind to discern its duty, makes it bold to venture upon sin. But, whosoever it is that God shuts up under such a frame of spirit, that man carries the mark of death about him, and the wrath of God, in all likelihood, abides upon him.

And thus I have done with the first thing proposed; which was to show how, and by what means, God seals up a sinner to perdition. Come we now to

II. The second, which is to show, *what sort of obstinate sinners those are, that God deals with in this manner*: I shall instance in two.

1. Such as sin against clear and notable warnings from God. Before a sinner comes to have finished his course, if he can but reflect upon and trace over the several dealings of God's special providence, he will find, that there have been many stops and rubs thrown in his way; which might have given him fair warning to make a stand, at least, if not to retreat. For God sometimes hedges in a sinner's way, so that it is really very difficult for him to proceed, and not only more safe, but also more easy for him to return. How many men have gone to church, with their hearts fully engaged in a resolution to pursue some secret, beloved sin; and there have been strongly arrested with the convincing force of some word, so seasonably, and, as it were, purposely directed against that sin, that they have thought the preacher to have looked into their very hearts, and to have been as privy to their most inward thoughts and designs, as their own consciences! Now this is a manifest admonition and caution, cast in by God himself; which to balk or break through, greatly enhances the sinner's guilt. Sometimes God warns a sinner from his course, by making strong impressions upon his mind of its unlawfulness, and contrariety to the divine will: which impressions are so strong and cogent, that they overbear all the shifts and carnal reasonings that the subtlety of a wicked heart can make in the behalf of it. Again, sometimes God meets the sinner with some heavy threatening sickness, lays him upon the bed of pain and languishing, and scares him with the fears of an approaching death, and the weight of an endless confusion. And then he pleads with him, opens the book of conscience, and sets before him his sins, represented with all their killing circumstances and dismal appearances, together with their hideous, destructive consequences in the everlasting endurance of an infinite wrath. In which case, as the condition of sickness and danger is usually a relenting condition, so, no doubt, but at that time, glorious designs of repentance are taken up by the sinner. But as soon as he is released of his sickness, he quickly grows sick of

his repentance; and, as the Roman orator says, *Timor non diuturni magister officii*: nothing more common than for the violences of fear to return to the inclinations of nature. Possibly, after all this, God meets the sinner again, scatters his estate, makes a breach upon his reputation, and so disciplines him with poverty and disgrace, till, at length, he resumes his forgotten repentances, and recovers himself into soberer thoughts and severer principles.

These are the methods, that, for the most part, God takes to reduce obstinate sinners. But yet, there both have been and still are men in the world deeply engaged, and, as it were, fixed and riveted in their sins, notwithstanding all these and the like admonitions. But whosoever they are that can frustrate and defeat all these arts and attempts of grace for the recalling of sinners, you may write them hopeless: for, where admonition cannot enter, nothing but death and destruction can.

2. The other sort of sinners are such as sin against special renewed vows and promises of obedience made to God. This is not only to break God's bonds, laid upon us in conviction, but also those bonds and ties that we have laid upon ourselves, by our own voluntary protestations. A vow, or promise, is the most binding thing that can limit or restrain a free agent. And from mere natural principles, men generally bear such a reverence to them, that they must be far gone in a contempt of nature, as well as religion, before they can wholly break or cast them off. For, if these cannot bind, corruption must needs be boundless. Solomon gives us an excellent admonition in Eccles. v. 4: "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for God hath no pleasure in fools." Where we may observe, that he supposes that men are not of such prostitute consciences, as wholly to deny the performance of a vow; and therefore he fastens folly and wickedness upon the very delay of it. And if so, what can we think that he would have said to a downright breach of a vow? and that in a matter of such indispensable necessity as obedience? To break it here is therefore so transcendently wicked, because this was due upon the account of God's law, before, and without our promise. It obliged, of itself, as a duty; but a vow or solemn promise, superadded, sets home duty with a further obligation.

Moreover, the violation of these is more than ordinary sinful; not only from the necessity of the matter to which they oblige, but also from the occasion upon which they were made. For men seldom make such vows, but upon extraordinary cases; as upon the receipt of some great endearing mercy, or some notable deliverance; which causes them, by way of gratitude, to bind themselves to God in closer and stricter bonds of obedience. Whereupon, such as make a custom of affronting God, by a frequent and familiar breach of these, are justly very odious to him, and, from odious, quickly become unsupportable.

Where sin is grown inveterate, and the sinner unconquerable, so that he can endure no restraint, nothing can hold him; but, like the man possessed with a legion of devils, he breaks all chains and fetters that have been cast about him; we may be confident that evil is designed for him: he stands as a condemned person before God already. God has pronounced his doom. And though he has frequently broken promise with God, yet in this thing he shall find, that God will certainly keep his word with him.

And thus much for the second thing proposed; which was to show, what sort of obstinate sinners those are that God seals up to destruction. I come now to

III. The third, which is to answer and resolve two questions that may arise from the foregoing particulars.

1st. Whether the purpose of God, passed upon an obstinate sinner (here expressed to us by God's swearing against him), be absolutely irrevocable.

2dly. Whether a man may know such a purpose to have passed upon him antecedently to its execution.

For the first of these, I affirm that the scripture is full and clear for it. As for instance, God unalterably purposed the taking away the kingdom from Saul: of which purpose Samuel speaks thus, in 1 Sam. xv. 29, "The Strength of Israel," says he, "is not a man that he should repent:" where, by *repenting*, is meant only God's altering his counsel, or reversing his purpose.

And now, if God may pass such a purpose upon a man with reference to his temporal estate, why may he not also with reference to his eternal? Since the motive inducing God to one (which is the high malignity of sin) may be advanced to such a degree of provocation, as equally to induce him to the other; especially, since the difference of the subject, viz. that one is about a temporal, the other about an eternal estate, does not at all alter the nature of the action. For is it anyways strange in reason, absurd in divinity, or indeed, in any respect derogatory, even to the divine goodness itself, for God, upon unusual sins frequently repeated, pertinaciously continued in, and beset with circumstances of the highest aggravation and defiance, to take up a purpose concerning such a person, certainly to exclude him from salvation? This is so suitable, even to the most just and equal transactions between man and man, that I find no paradox to assert it, in respect of God's dealings, at all.

But some, perhaps, will urge: Suppose such a one should repent, change his life, and break off his sins, by a sincere and constant devoting of himself to the duty of piety and mortification, would the purpose of God stand still in force against such a one?

I answer, No ; but I add withal, that this, in the present case, is both an improper and an impossible supposition : for, supposing that God once commences such a purpose against any sinner, he always withholds and denies that grace which should render the means of repentance effectual, after that : so that it is certain that such a one will never have a will, or a heart, to repent and turn from his sins. And therefore, in the foregoing discourse, I show that God puts this purpose in execution, chiefly, by withdrawing the secret converting energy of his word : for to me it seems clear, that the word does not convert by any mere suasive force naturally inherent in it ; but, by a divine power concomitant to, and co-operating with it. It being otherwise hard to imagine, how a man can be barely persuaded out of his nature, or at least out of that which sways him as strongly. I show also, that God took away the convincing edge and impression of his providences ; so that they never became effectual to reduce such a one.

From all which it follows, that upon these grounds the foregoing question is impertinent. For though God promises salvation upon a certain condition ; yet if he alone, by his grace, is able to effect that condition, and upon great provocation refuses to effect it ; it is evident that he may, upon failure of that condition, irreversibly purpose to condemn a sinner, and yet stand firm to the truth of his former promise.

This is most certain ; that both these propositions may, and are, and must be unalterably true ; namely, That whosoever repents, and leaves his sins, shall be saved ; and yet that he, whosoever God has sworn shall never enter into his rest, can never enter into it : and all pretences to the contrary are but harangue and declamation, and fit to move none but such as understand not the strength of arguments, or the force of propositions. And thus much in answer to the first question.

The second is, Whether a man may know such a purpose to have passed upon him, antecedently to its execution ?

In answer to which, we must observe, that the ordinary ways by which God imparts the knowledge of his will to men, are only these two : 1. God's declaration of it by his word. 2. Men's collection of it from its effects.

Now, for the first of these, I shall lay down this assertion ; that every peremptory and absolute declaration of something to be done by God, does not always infer God's absolute purpose to do that thing, as to the event of it.

The due consideration of which is of so great moment, that without it we cannot rightly understand many of the promises and threatenings of God, which run in terms absolute and peremptory, and yet never come to be fulfilled. As for instance, in that first great threatening made to Adam in Gen. ii. 17, " In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die ; " we find, that



the execution did not reach the letter of the denunciation; forasmuch as Adam long survived the violation of that precept, to which this threatening was annexed.

And then, in the next place, for promises. Let us take that eminent one made by God to Eli, in 1 Sam. ii. 30, where God repeats his own promise in terms very absolute: "Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father should walk before me for ever;" yet he adds in the very next words, "Far be it from me." Strange! that when God had promised a thing absolutely, he should add afterwards, "Far be it from me" to perform it. How are these things reconcileable to, and consistent with his immutable truth and veracity? For the explication of which,

(1.) We must observe first, particularly, concerning God's threatenings; that frequently they do not signify the event of the thing threatened, but sometimes declare only the merit of the action and the will of God, that such a punishment should be due to such an offence; not that it should be eventually inflicted for it: so that those words in Genesis signify only thus much, "In the day that thou eatest," thou shalt certainly be obnoxious and liable to death: and so Adam really was, and might have been proceeded against according to the tenor of that sentence, had God been pleased to take him upon the advantage.

(2.) We must observe jointly concerning both promises and threatenings, that they often run in absolute terms, when really they imply a condition. So that the promise made to Eli and his family implied the condition of their obedience and pious behaviour towards God; which failing and the promises thereupon not being performed, it appeared, that however in words it was absolute, yet in sense and design it was but conditional. From all which I affirm, that promises and threatenings, though expressed in never such absolute terms, yet cannot be known to be absolute or conditional, till such time as they are put in execution. And yet therefore upon this ground no sinner can conclude that God has taken up such a purpose against him, till he finds it actually fulfilled upon him. To which I add further, that God now-a-days makes no such declaration of his purposes to any particular persons.

2. In the next place then, if any will pretend to gather the knowledge of such a purpose of God against him, it must be from some effects of it. Such, as I show, were God's withdrawing his grace, and that secret convincing power, that operates in his word and in his providences: but this cannot immediately be known by any man; since it is (as we here suppose it to be) altogether secret. Or, further, he must gather this knowledge from some qualifications, or signs accompanying those persons that are in such a wretched condition. Such, as I show, were sinning against particular warnings and admonitions from God; as also

against frequently renewed vows and promises of amendment and obedience. But these I mentioned not as certain, infallible marks of such a forlorn estate, but only as shrewd signs of it. For besides that the scripture declares no man absolutely and finally lost, as soon as these qualifications are found upon him, unless they continue so till his death ; so it is further manifest, that the grace of God is so strange and various, in its working upon the heart of men, that it sometimes fastens upon and converts old overgrown sinners, such as, to the eye of reason, were going apace to hell, and almost at their journey's end.

From all which it follows, that no man, in this life, can pass any certain judgment concerning the will of God in reference to his own final estate ; but ought, with fear and trembling, to attend God's precept and revealed will ; and so gathering the best evidence he can of his condition from his obedience, with all humility to expect the issue of God's great counsels and intentions.

But here, to prevent all mistakes about what has been said, you must observe, that there is a wide difference between the purpose of God, that I have been hitherto discoursing of, and that which the schools call God's decree of reprobation : concerning which I shall only remark this by the way, That there is so much to be argued, both from scripture and reason, grounded upon the actuality and immutability of the divine nature for it ; and so much, on the contrary, from the difficulty of its seeming to some to make God the author of sin, and to cross some received principles of morality, to be urged against it, that had not authority most wisely and justly restrained all discourses of it from the pulpit, I think none could show a better understanding of it, than by not presuming to determine any thing about it. And therefore my business rather is, only in a word or two to show, that the purpose of God, that I have been hitherto speaking of, is quite another thing from that decree considered according to the hypothesis of the schools, and that in a double respect.

1st. Because that decree is said to commence entirely upon God's good pleasure and sovereign will, and not upon any compulsive cause from without him ; but this purpose commences upon the provocation of the sinner, as an impulsive cause moving God to make such a determination against him.

2dly. Because that decree is said to be from all eternity ; but this purpose is actually taken up in time ; namely, after some signal provocation. And because the schools will not admit of any new immanent acts, new purposes or decrees in God ; therefore I call it a purpose only in a large and popular sense : for indeed, in strictness of speech, it is properly but an effect of God's will, actually disposing the sinner under such circum-

stances, as meeting with his corruption, will certainly end in his perdition.

And thus having cleared these two questions, which was the third thing proposed to be handled,

IV. I descend now to the fourth and last, which is *to draw some uses from the whole*. And the

First shall be of exhortation, to exhort and persuade all such as know how to value the great things that concern their peace, to beware of sinning under sin-aggravating circumstances. What those are, you may know by recollecting, in your meditations, what has been delivered. It is wonderful to consider what weight a bare circumstance gives to sin, and what a vast and wide disparity it makes between actions of the same nature. What is the reason that the same sin does not actually fetch down wrath upon one, when it strikes another with an immediate vengeance, but because in one it is empoisoned with more killing circumstances than in the other? Now we are to know, that the things that chiefly provoke God to swear against men, are judgments, mercies, means of grace, warnings, and convictions; these are the things that, neglected, double and treble the guilt of sins, and of damnable, make them actually condemning. These are the fair days that ripen us apace for the sickle of sin-revenging justice. It is said of the times of heathenism, in Acts xvii. 30, that "God winked at them;" what was the reason? Certainly their sins, as to the nature and kind of them, were as black, hideous, and provoking, and struck as high as the highest improvement of natural corruption could reach. Why then cannot God wink also at the same sins now under the gospel? Why! because as the gospel offers grace to sinners, so it adds guilt and greatness to sin. A dunghill under the hot sunshine is much more offensive than under the shade.

As men therefore fear falling under that terrible sentence expressed in the words; as they dread a final unappeasable anger, let them shun these sin-heightening aggravations; and beware of sinning against judgments and deliverances, gospel light, clear warnings, and strong convictions. For can we in reason imagine, that that great and universal Providence, that takes cognizance of every the least accident, and reckons every hair that falls from our head, should not have some great and particular designs upon the souls of men in the several strange and unusual passages of their lives? Neither God's words nor his works can be frustrate. He neither discourses nor fights with the air. And therefore in the strength and evidence of what I have laid down, I must affirm, that that person, whosoever he is, whom the continual returns of the word preached does not alter; but that his old sins continue firm, entire, and unbattered; the baseness of his inclinations unchanged; so that after all his attendance upon, the

word, his tongue and thoughts are as loose to all filthiness, to all levity of discourse and behaviour, as before;—he also whose former distresses, hardships, and disasters have not laid him low in the valleys of humility, nor circumscribed the lashings out of his luxury, but that his past miseries and restraints give only a relish instead of a check to his present pride and intemperance;—and lastly, he whom all the caresses and embraces of providence have not been able to win upon, so as to endear him to a virtuous strictness, or to deter him from a vicious extravagance: I say every such person, (unless the great God be trivial and without concern in his grand transactions with our immortal souls,) during this condition is, so far as we can judge, a fashioning for wrath. He is a probationer for hell, and carries about him the desperate symptoms and plague-tokens of a person likely to be sworn against by God, and hastening apace to a sad eternity.

The other use and improvement of the foregoing particulars shall be to convince us of the great and fearful danger of a daring continuance in a course of sin. The counsel of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar carries an equal aspect upon us all that we “break off our sins by righteousness,” and change our lives by an immediate repentance: for who knows what dreadful things may be forming in the mind of God against us during our impenitence? Who knows what a day may bring forth, and what may be the danger of one hour’s delay? This is most sure, that every particular repeated act of sin, sets us one advance nearer to hell. And while we are sinning obstinately, and going on audaciously in a rebellious course, how can we tell but God may “swear in his wrath” against us, and register our names in the black rolls of damnation? And then our condition is sealed and determined for ever.

It is dangerous dallying with, and venturing upon the Almighty. God is indeed merciful, but we know mercy itself may be angry, and compassion provoked may swear our destruction. Every sinner, upon his return to God, should repent and believe with that confidence, as if God were nothing but mercy; but having once repented, it would be his wisdom to live with that caution and exactness, as if God were nothing but justice. For none certainly can be too exact in acquitting himself to God, or too cautious in the business of eternity. And therefore when the tempter shall dress up any beloved minion sin, and present it to our eager inflamed appetites, let us not look upon it as it paints and sparkles in the temptation; but rather let us demur a while, and debate with ourselves, what may be the issue of that sin, if committed by us, in the court of heaven: whether it may not provoke God to protest that we shall never come thither; and then believe it, God will say, as he does in Isaiah xlv. 23, “I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righ-

teousness, and it shall not return." What God absolutely purposes and declares, God himself cannot, because he will not disannul. Still therefore, let us keep this consideration alive upon our spirits, that before the sentence of death pass upon us, it may fairly be prevented; but when it is once denounced, it can never be recalled. God in mercy give us a right understanding of these things.

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

## SERMON II.

### THE FOLLY OF ATHEISM.

#### PSALM XIV. 1.

*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*

THAT any one should degenerate to that degree of unreasonable baseness, as to deny that being and power by which he breathes, is not easy to imagine, did not some force us to believe so much of them upon their own word; such as, history tells us, were Diagoras Melius, Theodorus Cyrenæus, and the like: and we have no cause to have so much better an opinion of the modern age, as to doubt that it has those who are ready enough to let fly and vent the same impiety. Though, let them affirm it never so much in words, there are not wanting arguments to persuade us, that their mouth belies their heart; and that they have an inward, invincible sense of what they outwardly renounce, holding them under the iron bands of a conviction to be stifled or outbraved, or hectorated out of their conscience; as shall be discoursed of afterwards.

In the words we have these two particulars:

- I. An assertion made; "There is no God."
- II. The person by whom it is made the fool."

I. As for *the assertion*, we may consider in it two things: 1. The thing asserted; 2. The manner of its assertion.

1. As for the thing asserted; that "there is no God;" it may be understood,

(1.) Either, first, of an absolute removal of the divine being and existence: that there is no such spiritual, infinite, omniscient, omnipotent nature, as we call God: but that the world is of itself; and that there is nothing else distinct from it. This is the highest degree of asserting that there is no God.

(2.) It may be understood of a removal of God's providence, by which he governs and takes account of all the particular affairs of the world; and more especially of the lives and actions of men, so as to reward or punish them according as they are good or evil. This is a lower degree of atheism; but has altogether as masculine an influence upon the manners and practices of men as the former; and perhaps upon a due improvement of consequences, will be found to end in it. Epicurus was of this opinion. He confessed that there was a God; but as for his interposing or concerning himself in our affairs here below, this he

utterly denied, and that for a reason as absurd as his assertion was impious; namely, that it would disturb his ease, and consequently interrupt his felicity, to superintend over our many little and perplexed businesses.

Now, I suppose, the text may be understood equally of both these senses: and accordingly I shall so take it in the ensuing discourse.

2. The next thing is the manner of the assertion; "The fool hath said in his heart." It wears the badge of guilt, privacy, and darkness; and, as if it were sensible of the treason it carries in its bowels, it hides its head, and dares not own itself in the face of the sun and of the world. Atheism is too conscious to be venturous and open; that is the property of truth, the daughter of the light and of the day. It is not the nature of this ill thing, to display itself in words, and to summons proselytes upon the market-place. It will not hang up a flag of defiance against God, and cry out, "Hear, O heaven, and hearken, O earth: there is no such thing as a maker and governor of the universe; it is all but a crafty invention of statesmen, priests, politicians, to bring mankind to their lure, and to bind the bonds of government faster upon societies."

No; the atheist is too wise in his generation to make remonstrances and declarations of what he thinks. His tongue shall keep the track of the common and received way of discoursing; and, perhaps, his interest may sometimes carry him so far, as to disguise his behaviour with zeal for the assertion of those things which his belief is a stranger to. It is his heart, and the little council that is held there, that is only privy to his monstrous opinions. There it is that he dethrones his Maker, and deposes conscience from its government and vicegerency. For here, he knows, he may think, and think freely, and uncontrollably; since there is no casement in his bosom, no listening hole in his heart, from which the informer may catch and carry away a guilty thought.

He that would see the stage upon which human liberty acts entirely and to the utmost, must retreat into his heart, and there he shall see a principle, absolute and unshackled, and not framed into any demureness, and assumed postures of virtue and gravity, from the awe of men's eye and observation, which, instead of the man, exhibits only a dress to the spectator. He shall find his heart bold enough to question the laws he bows to; to examine the first principles, that in his profession lie sacred and untouched; to ransack and look into foundations; and, in a word, to think as he pleases, while he speaks and does as he is commanded.

It will now concern us to inquire a little, what is meant and implied by the fool's saying in his heart that "there is no God."

I conceive it may imply these following things:

1. An inward wishing, that there was no God. There is nothing more properly the language of the heart, than a wish. It is the thirst and egress of it, after some wanted, but desired object. The atheist first pleases his contemplation, with the supposition of that free range that he might take in all the gardens of pleasure, if there were no superior eye to supervise and judge him. And, how brave a thing it were to have the entertainments of a feast every day, and no reckoning brought up in the rear of them! to be voluptuous, and yet unaccountable! to be lord and master, and supreme in his choice, and to obey nothing but his own appetites!

These reflections fill his fancy with glistering imaginations: and the man cannot hold, but wish that troublesome thing, the Deity, that so sours and thwarts his contents, removed and wholly taken out of the way; than which there cannot be a thought of a higher malignity and a more daring venom. For he that wishes a thing would certainly effect it, if it were in his power. He that would have no God, is full of indignation that there is one; and, according to the poet's fable of the giants attempting to scale heaven, and to fight with the gods; so would he ascend, and ravish the sceptre from the hands of omnipotence, nestle himself in the government of the world, and, like Lucifer, place himself higher than the Most High.

Now it is probable that God punishes the wish, as much as he does the actual performance: for what is performance, but a wish, perfected with a power: and what is a wish, but a desire, wanting opportunity of action; a desire sticking in the birth, and miscarrying for lack of strength and favourable circumstances to bring it into the world. Certain it is, that wishes discover the most genuine and natural temper of the soul; for no man is more heartily himself, than he is in these.

They are indeed the chief weapons with which atheism can strike at the Deity: for the wickedness and malice of man cannot make any change in God. It cannot shake any of these solid felicities, that the divine nature is possessed of. The atheist can only wish, and would, and desire; that is, with the snake he can hiss, and show his poison; but it is not in his power to be mischievous any further.

2. The fool's saying in his heart, that "there is no God," implies his seeking out arguments to persuade himself that there is none. Where the heart is concerned, it will quickly employ the head; and reason shall be put to the drudgery of humouring a depraved mind, by providing it with a suitable hypothesis. The invention must be set a-work to hammer out something that may sit easy upon an atheistical disposition.

Hereupon the mind begins to boggle at immaterial substances, as things paradoxical and incomprehensible. It brings itself, by degrees, to measure all by sense; and to admit of nothing, but



as it is conveyed and vouched by the judgment of the eye, the ear, and the touch. A being purely spiritual shall be flouted at, as a chimera, and a subtile nothing.

Besides, men see all things still continue in the same posture, and proceed in the same course; which makes them question, whether there be any overruling, governing Being, distinct from that visible frame of things that is always in their view. As those scoffers in St. Peter questioned the future judgment, upon the sight of the constant, unchanged tenor of things, 2 Peter iii. 4: "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

They will declaim against a Deity also from this, that they think all human affairs proceed by chance, and accident, and great disorder; and consequently are not under the disposal or management of any superior understanding, that may be presumed to regulate and take cognizance of them. They see pious men afflicted, and the wicked exalted; the oppressor triumphing and clothing himself with the spoils of oppressed innocence and humility. They observe that virtue is no step to wealth or honour; and that conscience is but a hinderance and a strap to greatness. And perhaps also they find by experience in themselves, that they never thrived so well, as when they acted freely and boldly, and without the control of rules; when they unshackled themselves from the niceties and punctilios of that fruitless, unprofitable thing, called sincerity.

And these considerations may well be thought so much the more prevalent working in a corrupt breast, since we read, that they have made no small impression even upon the most excellent and sanctified persons; they staggered such heroes in the faith as David, Jeremy, and the like; they engaged them in a dispute with God himself about the justice and equality of his actings; they changed them, from believers, into disputants; and made them undertake their Maker for their opponent. Now, what the pious and the faithful may doubt of, the atheist may well be thought to deny. And no question but he puts his wits upon the rack, and uses all the art, learning, and industry he is master of, to rid himself of the belief of a God; a God that governs, and will hereafter judge the world. The thought of which cannot but be a perpetual check and allay to the revels of the epicure: and consequently must needs put him to relieve himself by the best shifts he can, to conjure down the terrors of his mind, and to drown the clamours and threatenings of his conscience; which, as long as he acknowledges a deity, will be sure to torment him with a secret, insupportable sting.

3. For the fool to say in his heart, "There is no God," implies not only a seeking for reasons and arguments, but also a marvellous readiness to acquiesce in any seeming probability or

appearance of reason that may make for his opinion. Which is a sure demonstration of a mind desperately in love with a notion, and yet suspicious and indifferent of the truth of it. It is a sign that a man is falling, when he catches at straws, and every little nothing, to support him. The atheist, who is so rigid an exactor of evidence and demonstration for the proof of those points that he rejects, yet with the most impudent and unreasonable partiality, produces no such thing, but only remote, pitiful, precarious conjectures, for the assertion and defence of his own infidelity.

As for instance, how weak and slight were all the foregoing exceptions alleged in his behalf? His first cavil, produced against immaterial substances; concerning which, can the atheist prove that it implies any contradiction or absurdity, that there should be such substances, such natures as fall not under the cognizance of outward sense? Is there any solid argument to overthrow this? If there be, whence is it, that none of the philosophers have been hitherto able to assign such a one; and solidly to evince, as well as magisterially to assert, that all substance includes in it the dimensions of quantity; and consequently, that substance and body are but terms equivalent?

And then, for the other exception, drawn from the prosperity of the wicked, and the present afflictions of the godly and virtuous: is there any such disorder or injustice in this, when the assertors of Providence assert also a future estate of retribution in another world? where the present sense of things shall be vastly and universally changed; and the epicure shall pass from his baths, and his beds of roses, into a bed of flames; and the poor, distressed saint be translated from his prison and his oppressors, into joys, pleasures, and glories that are unspeakable. It may be replied, that the atheist believes no such thing: but, whether he does or no, it is not material as to our present business, which is only to prove the reasonableness of God's dealing with the wicked and the just, in this world, upon supposition of the truth of this principle; which it has not been in the power of any atheist yet to shake or to disprove; and, for the present, falls not under this discourse.

4. And lastly, to mention yet another way, different from all the former: for a man to place his sole dependence, as to his chief good and happiness, on any thing besides God, is, as we may so speak, virtually, and by consequence, for him to say in his heart, "There is no God." It is, indeed the voice of a man's actions, the direct affirmation of his life: for while a man expects that from the creature, which every created being can only have, and consequently ought only to expect, from its creator, it is a practical, and, in its kind, a loud denial of a God; inasmuch as in this case a man so behaves himself, as if really there were none: and therefore in scripture is most emphatically styled a "living without God in the world."

Which, though it does not always include a direct denial of the divine existence, yet, so far as the acknowledgment of that ought to influence the life, the impiety of it is the very same, and the absurdity greater. For grant but the speculative atheist his supposition and principle, that there is no Deity or Providence, and he cannot be charged with any great unreasonableness of proceeding, for his giving way to all his appetites and lusts in the prosecution of their respective excesses and irregular gratifications. But for a man who has not paved his way to such a license of acting, by a life of the same principle, but who owns in his mind a clear and a standing persuasion of the being of a supreme maker, judge, and governor of the world, yet to trample upon all rules and laws prescribed for the regulation of his behaviour towards this his Maker, and to give himself wholly over to the dictates of his unbridled passions and affections; this assuredly is the height of folly; it is the granting of the antecedent in the judgment, and the denial of the consequence in the practice.

That man who places all his confidence, hope, and comfort, in his estate, his friend, or greatness, so that upon the failure of any of these his heart sinks, and he utterly desponds as to all enjoyment or apprehension of any good or felicity to be enjoyed by man, does as really deify his estate, his friend, and his greatness, as if in direct terms he should say to each of them, "Thou art my God;" and should rear an altar or a temple to them, and worship before them in the humblest adoration: nay it is much more; since God looks upon himself as treated more like a Deity, by being loved, confided in, and depended upon, than if a man should throng his temple with a whole hecatomb, sacrifice thousands of rams, and pour ten thousand rivers of oil upon his altars.

Let every man, therefore, lay his hand upon his heart, and consider with himself, what that thing is that wholly takes it up and commands it as to all its affections; and let him know, that that thing, whatsoever it be, is his god; and that God really so accounts of it: and consequently, that it is possible for a man to "say in his heart, that there is no God," though he neither blasphemes or denies his being, nor divests him of his providence and government of the world.

And thus much for the first thing, the assertion that "there is no God."

II. I come now to the second, namely, *the author of this assertion*, who, the text tells us, is "the fool," and his folly will be made to appear from these following reasons:

1. That such a one, in making and holding this assertion, contradicts the general judgment and notion of mankind. He opposes his drop to the ocean, his little forced opinion, to the torrent of universal, natural instinct, that infused this persuasion

into every one before his first milk. It is a notion that a man is not catechized, but born into: his mother's womb was the school he learned it in. It sticks to him like a piece of his essence, and his very being is the argument that enforces it. Hereupon it has possessed and spread itself into all nations, all languages, all societies and corporations: nor was it ever known, that any company of men constantly owned the denial of a Deity. Many nations have indeed foully erred, and abused their reason in the particular choice of a God, or rather of the worship of God. For I verily believe, that when the Egyptians and others worshipped this thing or that, they designed to worship the Supreme Being, as manifesting some effect of his power or goodness by that thing. I say, though the nations perverted themselves by idolatry, yet the general notion and acknowledgment of a deity remained entire amongst them. So that the contrary opinion of the atheist is not so much confuted as overwhelmed. And there is no man that can rationally profess himself an atheist, but must also profess himself wiser than the whole world, oppose his single ratiocination to the ratiocination of all mankind; but surely, the match will be found marvellous, unequal, and the vast disparity of the very number, will be an unanswerable presumption against him. For what he can be thought to find out or discern more, than so many millions of the subtlest and most improved wits, every one of which was perhaps of a quicker apprehension and a further reach than himself?

It is morally impossible for any falsity to be universally received and believed, both as to all times and places; and therefore an atheist appears in the world as a strange, unusual thing, as an irregularity, and exception from the standing rules of nature; like a man born without legs or arms, or indeed, rather without a head or a heart.

2. The folly of such a person appears in this, that he lays aside a principle easy and suitable to reason, and substitutes in the room of it one strange and harsh, and, at the best, highly improbable. For is it not most suitable to reason, there being a necessity of a first mover, a thing granted by all, that an intelligent nature of a substance above the grossness of body, infinite in wisdom, power, goodness, and all other perfections, should first of all contrive and give being to this fabric of the world, and afterwards preserve, govern, and order every thing in it to his wise and righteous purposes? Is there any thing, I say, in this, that an unprejudiced reason does not immediately close or fall in with, as that that is fairly consistent with all its principles, and grates upon none of them?

But the atheist that puffs at this, and lays it wholly aside, what does he resolve the phenomena of nature into? How come we by this world, according to his philosophy? Why, he either tells us, that it was from eternity; a strange, though much the

most rational, hypothesis that he can frame. For if it has existed from all eternity, whence is it that we have no history or record of any thing beyond a little above five thousand years? How come the transactions of so many myriads of years to be swallowed up in such deep silence and oblivion? And as for the story even of those five thousand years, we are beholden to the scriptures for it; for all profane histories set out from a much later date: so that this hypothesis is hugely improbable and unfit for any rational man to build his discourse, much less to venture his salvation upon.

But if this will not do, we are told that there was an infinite innumerable company of little bodies, called atoms, from all eternity, flying and roving about in a void space, which at length hitched together and united; by which union and connexion they grew at length into this beautiful, curious, and most exact structure of the universe. A conceit fitter for Bedlam than a school or an academy; and taken up, as it were, in direct opposition to common sense and experience. For, let any one take a vessel full of sand or dust, and shake it from one end of the year to the other, and see whether ever it will fall into the figure of a horse, an eagle, or a fish: or, let any one shake ten thousand letters together, till by some lucky shake they fall at length into an elegant poem or oration. That chance and blind accident, the usual parent of confusion and all deformity in men's actions, should yet in this outdo the greatest art and diligence in the production of such admirable, stupendous effects, is contrary to all the rules that human nature has been hitherto accustomed to judge by; and fit for none to assert but for him, who with his God has also renounced his reason.

3. The folly of such a person appears from the causes and motives inducing him to take up this opinion; which, amongst others, are two.

(1.) Great impiety, and disquiet of conscience consequent thereupon. Some have sinned their accounts so high, and debauched their consciences so far, that they dare not look the persuasion of a Deity in the face: and therefore, they think to convey themselves from God, by hiding God from themselves; by suppressing, and, as much as they can possibly, extinguishing all belief and thought of him. They are so hardened in sin, and so far gone in the ways of sensuality, that to think of retreating by repentance is loathsome, and worse than death to them; and therefore they cut the work short, and take off all necessity of repentance by denying providence, and a future judgment of the lives and actions of men.

(2.) The second cause of this opinion is great ignorance of nature and natural causes. It is a saying of the lord Bacon that a taste and smattering of philosophy inclines men to atheism, but a deep and a thorough knowledge of it directly lead men to

religion. And if the assertor of the world's eternity, or of its emerging out of the forementioned coalition of atoms, would consider how impossible it is for a body to put itself into motion without the impulse of some superior immaterial agent; and what an unactive sluggish thing that is that the philosophers call matter, and how utterly unable to fashion itself into the several forms it bears, he would quickly fly to a spiritual, intelligent mover, such a one as we affirm to be God.

4. And lastly, the folly of such persons as say in their heart, "There is no God," appears from those cases in which such persons begin to doubt and waver, and fly off from their opinion. I shall instance in two.

(1.) In the time of some great and imminent danger. As it is reported of the Persians in Æschylus, that were routed by the lake Strymon; and thereupon, being either to pass the ice then ready to thaw, or to be cut in pieces by the enemy; though before they held, or at least pretended to hold, that there was no God; yet then they fell upon their knees, and prayed to God that the ice might bear them: nor is this to be wondered at, since all men by nature seem to have a secret acknowledgment of a certain invisible power that is able either to help or to hurt them, which perhaps is the first rude draught and original seed of the persuasion of a Deity. And it is this secret acknowledgment that naturally makes men, in a great strait and extremity, willing to rely upon more assistances than they see, and to extend their hope further than their sense.

But now, is not every such person most ridiculous, who shall owe his religion to the disturbances of his fear, which he cast off in the settlement of his reason? Shall a little danger and confusion make him quake out his atheism, and be able to enthrone God in his mind, who by his being and constant preservation, and the exact frame and order of the universe, could never yet be convinced of any such thing? But this is an evident sign that the judgment of such persons lies not in their understanding, but in the lower region of man's nature, their affections.

(2.) The other time in which the atheist usually deserts his opinion, is the time of approaching death. What a different way of reasoning and discoursing has the mind then, and needs must it have so! for atheism is not any real persuasion, but a vain pretence and affectation, by which some would seem to be greater wits and higher speculators than other men. But alas! affectation expires upon a death-bed. No man has then any design to deceive or impose upon the reason of other men, much less upon his own. All his thought and desire then is to be as safe as he can: he knows that it has been the judgment of all the wise men in the world, that there is a supreme Judge and a future estate for men's souls; and he perceives his reason too light and too little to lay in the balance against them.

But now it is a most righteous thing with God, to let such, as have striven to free themselves from this belief, be able to overrule and bind up their conscience so far, as to keep it down for a long time; and then at length to let conscience loose upon them, with this terrible persuasion quick and awakened upon it: for God has not put it into any man's power to extinguish this witness that he has left of himself in the minds of men; he has not left men so much at their own disposal, as to obliterate and raise out what he has written in their hearts, and to be atheists when they please. And therefore, wheresoever I have hitherto made mention of atheists, I understand not such as have absolutely shaken off the notion of a Deity, but such as have endeavoured and attempted so to do, by arming themselves with arguments and considerations against it; and accordingly have proceeded so far, as to weaken and eclipse the present actings of this habitual persuasion; otherwise I fully believe, that there are some lucid intervals, in which, maugre all the art and force used to suppress it, it breaks forth and shows its terrifying commanding majesty over the guilty hearts of such wretches, but especially when they are to bid adieu to those little worldly supports that for a while bore up their spirits in their profaneness and contempt of God.

I have now finished what I first proposed from the words, namely, the assertion, that "there is no God," and the author of it, "the fool."

But here, after all, is it not a sad thing, that it should be pertinent for any preacher to make a sermon against atheism! A sin, that does not only unchristian, but unman the person that is guilty of it! But we have great reason to judge, that the corruption of men's manners is grown to that enormous height, that men are not as they were heretofore. Those awes of religion and a Deity, that a less improved debauchery left still untouched upon the conscience, the modern and more thorough-paced sinner endeavours to deface and throw off as pedantry and narrowness, and the foolish prejudices and infusions of education.

What this will come to, and whether God and nature will suffer men to be as bad as they strive to be, I cannot determine; but, surely, they generally affect a superiority in villany above their ancestors; and it is not enough for a man to approve himself a laborious drunkard, and a dexterous cheat, or a sly adulterer, unless he can set off all with the crowning perfection of passing for a complete atheist.

I suppose the foregoing discourse may be of some use to us; and if so, what can that use be so properly, as to give every one of us a view and prospect into his own heart? None knows how much villany lodges in this little retired room. The prophet tells us that "the heart is desperately wicked;" and we need no other argument to prove his words, than that it is the

soil where this detestable weed grows. There are few who believe that they can be atheists, even in the sense that I have declared ; but it is because they have not studied the workings and methods, the depths and hollownesses of that subtle principle within them, their heart. But as for such as will set themselves to watch over and counterwork it, so as to prevent this monstrous birth, let them be advised to beware of three things, as I think, the most ready leaders to atheism.

1st. Great and crying sins, such as make the conscience raw and sick, and so drive it to this wretched course for its cure.

2dly. Let them beware of discontents about the cross passages of God's providence towards them. A melancholy discontented mind, by long brooding upon these things, has at length hatched the cockatrice's egg, and brought forth atheism.

3dly and lastly. Let men especially beware of devoting themselves to pleasure and sensuality. There is no one thing in the world that casts God out of the heart like it, and makes the heart by degrees to hate and be weary of all thoughts of him.

These things cannot here be insisted upon. It remains, therefore, that we endeavour to preserve a constant fear and love of the great God upon our spirits ; that so we fall not into the fatal, devouring gulf of either of their sins ; as namely, to "deny the Lord that bought," or to renounce the God that made us.

To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.



# SERMON III.

THE ISRAELITES' INGRATITUDE TO GOD.

PSALM CVI. 7.

*Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt ; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies ; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea.*

PROVIDENCE, in all its parts and methods of acting, seems to carry on this great design, not to leave itself without witness in the world. And for this cause, it gives greater or less manifestations of its superintendency over affairs here below, those especially relating to the church, according to the proportion of the church's exigencies and occasions. Which when they are so great and arduous, that they seem even to call out for help from heaven, and to exceed all possibility of redress, but by the interposal of a miracle, why then miracles come in season, and shall be shown, as being the rarities and reserves of Heaven, designed to recover upon men's hearts a belief of that Providence, that the constant, uninterrupted course of natural causes is apt to obscure, and to render the less observable.

But in no passage since the creation did omnipotence ever so eminently make bare its arms and show itself, as it did in those stupendous proceedings in Egypt, following miracle with miracle, till at length, even in spite of power and malice, and obstinacy itself, it brought out the armies of Israel free and victorious, from amidst the iron grinding jaws of a long, a cruel, and unsupportable bondage and subjection.

And that the world may see that the hand of divine power is not yet shortened, nor the bowels of divine goodness straitened, but that God is as able and ready to save his church as ever ; succeeding ages have not been wholly without some declarations of it, in several transcendent and miraculous instances of help and deliverance ; when once the straitness and vast difficulty of affairs has baffled and laughed at all assistances of created power, and so made the omnipotent Author of the deliverance visible and conspicuous.

And amongst these supernatural instances of temporal mercy, vouchsafed to mankind in these latter ages of the world, there is none certainly superior, if any parallel, to that glorious masterpiece of Providence, to the commemoration of which we are called by this day's solemnity. For if ever the miracles of Egypt were re-acted, it has been upon the scene of England ; which

stands, as it were, a copy, and a lasting transcript both of the bondage and the deliverance. Both church and state were under the yoke and lash of remorseless tyrants and taskmasters. Tyrants resolved to have bound the bonds of their captivity for ever, and never to have let them go: nor was there any hope or likelihood of it, till God himself undertook the business, and plagued the nation, by shaking the threatening sword of a civil war over it, that had so lately turned all into blood; by blasting it with the hail and stones of several insulting governments, then as changeable as the weather; also pestering the land with the frogs of this sect, and the lice of that, and the locusts of another; likewise confounding our English Egyptians with the thick darkness of faction and ignorance; and lastly, snatching away that first-born of tyranny, perjury, and rebellion, and blowing him out of the world, as he did the locusts out of Egypt; till at length breaches and divisions amongst themselves, like the dividing of the Red sea, and the parting of the mighty waters, both swallowed up them, and became as a wall of brass on both hands, to our king and his loyal exiled subjects, to convey them safe into a possession of those rights which, both by the gift of God and the laws of men, were so undoubtedly their own.

Thus we have seen some resemblance between the transactions of Providence with Israel and with ourselves. We have seen how like we are to them for their miraculous deliverances; and, which is the worst, though perhaps the nearest, part of the resemblance, it will appear also presently, how like we are to them for their miraculous ingratitude.

In the text we have these three things observable.

I. The unworthy and ungrateful deportment of the Israelites towards God upon a most signal mercy and deliverance: "They provoked him."

II. The aggravation of this unworthy deportment from the nature and circumstance of the deliverance: "They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea."

III. And lastly, the cause of this misbehaviour and unworthy deportment, which was their not understanding the designs of mercy in the several instances of it; "They understood not thy wonders in Egypt."

I. And for the first of these, *the Israelites' ungrateful and unworthy deportment towards God*: "They provoked him."

To *provoke*, is an expression setting forth a peculiar and more than ordinary degree of misbehaviour; and seems to import an insolent daring resolution to offend. A resolution not contented with one single stroke of disobedience, but such a one as multiplies and repeats the action, till the offence greatens, and rises into an affront: and as it relates to God, so I conceive it strikes at him in a threefold respect: 1. Of his power: 2. Of his goodness; 3. Of his patience.

1. And first it rises up against the power and prerogative of God. It is, as it were, an assault upon God sitting upon his throne, a snatching at his sceptre, and a defiance of his very royalty and supremacy. He that provokes God does in a manner dare him to strike, and to revenge the injury and invasion upon his honour. He considers not the weight of God almighty's arm, and the edge of his sword, the swiftness and poison of his arrows, but puffs at all, and looks the terror of sin-revenging justice in the face. The Israelites could not sin against God, after those miracles in Egypt, without a signal provocation of that power that they had so late and so convincing an experience of: a power that could have crushed an Israelite as easily as an Egyptian; and given as terrible an instance of its consuming force upon false friends, as upon professed enemies: in the sight of God, perhaps, the less sort of offenders of the two.

And can the sins of any nation in the world more affront God in the grand attribute of his power, than the sins of ours; which has given such flaming illustrious experiments of itself, as have dazzled our eyes and astonished our hearts. For have we not seen a flourishing state and a glorious church broken in pieces, and, as it were, extinguished in a moment? and a prince, as great as good, torn out of his throne, stripped of his power, and at length disastrously cut off by the hand of violence? and dare we now sin against that power that has thus shown us how easily it can confound and overturn all the glories of worldly grandeur? and which after all this, has, by a miraculous exertion of itself, called up a buried church and state from the grave, and given them a stupendous resurrection from the confusion and rubbish of a long and woful desolation: and this by bringing back the banished son of a murdered father, even over the heads of his enemies armed and potent, and rather amazed than conquered into their former allegiance. A work so big with miracle and wonder, so apparently above, nay even against, the common methods of human acting, that, were there no other argument to prove a Providence, this one passage alone were sufficient; and that such a one as carries in it the force and brightness of a demonstration.

2. Provoking God imports an abuse of his goodness. God, as he is clothed with power, is the proper object of our fear; but as he displays his goodness, of our love. By one he would command, by the other he would win, and, as it were, court our obedience. And an affront to his goodness, his tenderness, and his mercy, as much exceeds an affront of his power, as a wound at the heart transcends a blow on the hand. For when God shall show miracles of mercy, step out of the common road of providence, commanding the host of heaven, the globe of the earth, and the whole system of nature out of its course, to serve a design of goodness upon a people, as he did upon the Israelites;

was not a provocation, after such obliging passages, infinitely base and insufferable, and a degree of ingratitude higher than the heavens it struck at, and deeper than the sea that they passed through?

3. Provoking God imports an affront upon his long-suffering and his patience. The movings of nature, in the breasts of all mankind, tell us how keenly, how regretfully, every man resents the abuse of his love; how hardly any prince, but one, can put up an offence against his acts of mercy; and how much more affrontive it is to despise mercy ruling by the golden sceptre of pardon, than by the iron rod of a penal law. But now patience is a further and a higher advance of mercy; it is mercy drawn out at length; mercy wrestling with baseness, and striving, if possible, even to weary and outdo ingratitude; and therefore a sin against this is the highest pitch, the utmost improvement, and, as I may so speak, the *ne plus ultra* of provocation. For when patience shall come to be tired, and even out of breath with pardoning, let all the invention of mankind find something further, either upon which an offender may cast his hope, or against which he can commit a sin. But it was God's patience that the ungrateful Israelites sinned against; for they even plied and pursued him with sin upon sin, one offence following and thronging upon the neck of another, the last account still rising highest, and swelling bigger, till the treasures of grace and pardon were so far drained and exhausted, that they provoked God to swear, and what is more, to "swear in his wrath," and with a full purpose of revenge, that they should "never enter into his rest."

And thus I have given you the threefold dimension of the provocation that the Israelites passed upon God; and it is to be feared, that our sins have been cast into the same mould, they do so exactly resemble them in all their proportions; for we are as deep in arrears to heaven, and have as large a sum of abused goodness and patience to account for, as ever they had; and so much greater is our account than theirs could be, that we had the advantage of their example to have forewarned us.

II. I proceed now to the second thing proposed from the text; which is, *the aggravation of the Israelites' unworthy deportment towards their almighty deliverer*, set forth in these words: "They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea."

The extraordinary emphasis of which expression, in the repeated use of the same words, shows what a particular and severe observation God passed upon their behaviour. The baseness and ingratitude of which he casts in their teeth, by confronting it with the eminent obligation laid upon them, by the glorious deliverance he vouchsafed them: a deliverance heightened and ennobled with these four qualifications: 1. Its greatness; 2. Its

unexpectedness ; 3. Its seasonableness ; 4. Its undeservedness. Of each of which in their order.

1. And first for the greatness of the deliverance. Very great surely it must needs have been, comparing the contemptible weakness of the persons delivered, with the strength and terror of the enemy from whom they were delivered. What were a company of poor oppressed bricklayers, inured to servitude as to an inheritance, for four hundred years successively, and consequently whose very soul and spirit was even lost in clay and rubbish, and made poor, and low, and grovelling by the disciplines of a long captivity? How were these able to have looked Pharaoh and his armies in the face, who had so long trembled under the frown and lash of the meanest of his task-masters? What could their trowels have done against the Egyptian swords; their aprons against the others' armour and artillery? They could be confident of nothing, but of sinking under the inequality of the encounter. And could there be a greater deliverance than thus to fetch a lamb out of the jaws of the lion, to wrest weakness out of the hands of power, and the captive from the clutches of the strong? This was the case of the Israelites.

And surely we shall find that it was our own too. For could there be a greater disproportion than there was between us and our oppressing enemies? Were they not, even in the very day of our deliverance, as strong, as mighty, and well armed as ever? Were their hands at all weakened, that they could not strike, or their swords blunted, that they could not wound? Naturally speaking, I am sure they were not: but whether their hearts were for the present changed by an immediate impression from heaven, or their hands overruled by the art and conduct of that great restorer of his country; certain it is, they were like men in amaze, and not able to act the habitual villany of their principles and dispositions. So that we saw our king returning to his own triumphantly, at the head of that army by which he had been driven and kept out; an army with their swords in their hands, and, for the most part, with their old principles in their hearts. And had not this deliverance all the marks of greatness and prodigy, that (be it spoken with reverence) almightiness itself could stamp upon it? Search the annals of story, run over all the records of antiquity, and give it a parallel if you can. It could be none but the Almighty's doing, and therefore ought to be "marvellous in our eyes." It carried its author in its front, and every circumstance of the transaction was noted with the traces and signatures of a divine power and contrivance. It was too great for the measures of any finite created agents.

2. A second property of the deliverance vouchsafed to the Israelites at the Red sea, was its unexpectedness. Their wits failed them to contrive an escape, as well as their power to make good a resistance. The enemy was behind, and the sea before them; that is, death both faced them and pursued them too: and

could they expect, that either the hardened heart of a Pharaoh should relent, and bid them return, or the devouring element forget its cruelty, and turn their sanctuary to protect them?

It is true, indeed, that if any people in the world might have expected such miraculous countermands upon nature, they were the Israelites, to whom custom and frequency had made miracles so familiar, as even to offer them to their expectation. Yet we know they were far from inferring their future preservation from their former deliverance, and that the God of their fathers would act as miraculously in one, as he had done in the other; and thereupon we read these worthy expostulations of their infidelity, striking directly indeed at Moses, but tacitly reflecting upon God himself: *Exod. xiv. 11, 12*, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us out of Egypt? Did we not say to thee in Egypt, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? for it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." Death was their belief, death their fear, nothing but death their expectation. But now how welcome, how sweet and even transporting must such a deliverance needs be, as steps in between a great mischief and a great fear: as disappoints and confutes the terror of a man's expectations, and, as I may so say, baffles him according to his heart's desire! For the expectation and hope of a good fulfilled, is not so pleasing as the expectation and fear of a great evil defeated. It does not affect the mind with so sensible, so quick, and so exalting a delight. The reason of which is, because enjoyment in this state of mortality does not so much gratify as misery does afflict us; and consequently nature more desires to be delivered from one, than to be possessed of the other. If ever there is a "picture of silver," to set forth an "apple of gold," it is when the mercy of the deliverance is set forth and enhanced by the precedent fears and despairs of him that is delivered. For can any delight be greater, than for a man to set his foot upon the neck of that enemy, by whom but three minutes before he expected certainly to die? To behold that sea opening itself as a bosom to embrace, which he could not expect to be any other than a grave to swallow and consume? With these circumstances of endearment did God deliver the Israelites.

And with the very same did he advance the mercy of our deliverance: for it was a thing so much beyond men's expectation, before the doing of it, that they could scarce believe it when it was done; the astonishing strangeness of the thing made men almost question the reports of their own eyes and ears, and disbelieve the information of their very senses, so that we might in that day have taken up those emphatical words of the prophet David: "**Lord, when thou didst turn the captivity of thy people, then were we like unto those that dream.**" The matter and sub-

ject of our joy was so strange and unlikely, that, like men in a dream, we seemed to enjoy it rather by the flattering representations of fancy, than to possess it by any reality of fruition.

For so improbable was it, a little before it happened, that foreign princes and nations began to lay aside all hope of the king's restoration, and our next neighbours, together with their hopes of that, began to give over also their respects to his person, banishing him out of their territories, without any consideration of his near alliance of blood, and (which ought to have been the warmest argument in the breast of kings) the distress of majesty by such an act of inhospitable barbarity, as before was unheard of, and perhaps never practised but by themselves. And as for affairs here at home, factions and animosities grew higher and higher, clashing indeed amongst themselves, but unanimously conspiring against the royal interest. Nay, and did not the wonted fidelity and courage of many begin to warp and decline, while they were willing to buy a settlement under any usurped government, with the price of their allegiance to the right and lawful; so that the title of the just heir was looked upon as forlorn and desperate, and the restitution of it exploded as a thing impracticable; and that by many virtuosos who now enjoy so much under it; that they forget what formerly they deserved from it? And so far did things then seem to settle upon another bottom, that, as the Israelites said, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians:" so all parties, but the royal and episcopal, were recognizing and courting the new puny protector, and adoring that rising *ignis fatuus* as the Persians do the sun, comparing him, forsooth, to a peaceable Solomon, succeeding in the throne of his warlike father David; and there is no doubt but the father was just as like David for his piety, as the son was like Solomon for his wisdom; much at one.

But so little did their covenant put them in mind of their king, that his highness's most loyal and obedient subjects, especially of the schismatical preaching order, desired no change, nor ever thought of any, till the ministerial maintenance (so much as remained of it) began to reel and totter, and be made a prey to those whom they themselves had preached into such principles as would in the issue have certainly devoured them.

And as those persons desired no change, so the hearts even of the loyal and the faithful began to fail, and scarce to expect any; at least in such a manner as it came to pass. For who could have believed, that so many parties, whom both their guilt and interest had made so inveterate against their prince, could ever have fallen down at the feet of offended majesty, but in the field? That those whose blood boiled so high against him, could ever have been brought to receive him, keeping the same blood still in their veins? None could have expected any other restoration of his majesty but by dint of sword, by the battle of the

warrior, with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood ; or, in a word, that he should return any other way, than by which he was driven out. Let this, therefore, be the second commending property of our deliverance, that while it met with our desires it transcended our expectations.

3. The third commending property of the Israelites' deliverance was the eminent seasonableness of it. God delivered them at that very nick of time, when they were but one remove, one hair's breadth from destruction. One hour's delay might have made the deliverance for ever impossible. So that it was a mercy in season, and therefore in its prime. The hand of the enemy was already lift up, and then it could not be long before the blow. But God that interposes between the purpose and the action, even then when it is ripest for it, and immediately passing into it, diverted the enemy's rage, and took from him the power of revenge almost in the very midst of the opportunity. A rescue from death, though but threatening at a distance, is a mercy ; but to rescue from it when it hovers over a man, and is even grasping him in his talons, is the most endearing circumstance of mercy.

And now, if we pass from the Israelites to ourselves, (as very easily and naturally we may), we know how seasonably the day of our temporal redemption sprang in upon us. Our long-dying liberty seemed then taking its last gasp, and God knows what mischiefs were then hatching in the breasts of those tyrants. For that the furnace was heating, might be known by the sparks that flew out. A massacre was often spoken of and urged, and, it is like, not far from being intended ; the ministry and the law were then professedly struck at ; new oaths of abjuration invented and imposed, to ensnare the nation ; and, if it were possible, to plunge it deeper in perjury than it was before. Religion was so unhinged, both as to the discipline and doctrine of Christianity, that there was nothing certain but change, nothing constant but variety ; till, having run the round of all other alterations, they were passing into direct atheism, and casting off that Deity, whom, having so notoriously disobeyed, it was their concernment also to deny. In a word, the nation was then involved in a universal confusion ; its government, its laws, its religion, were then following their prince into banishment, and resolved not to return till he did.

And surely, now it grew high time for the English nation to think of recovering itself from some of that infamy and loud reproach, that the spilling of innocent royal blood, and the profane invasion of all that was sacred or civil had brought upon it, in the opinion of all the nations round about, that stood as spectators and detesters of those religious barbarities, those villanies cloaked and sanctified with the name of reformation. Time it was also for God to show himself, upon the account of our exiled



distressed sovereign, lest the taunts and triumphs of a too long successful villany, might have taken away either the hearts of his subjects, that they would not, or their abilities, that they could not have ministered to the necessities of his royal person. For, for ought we know, had the rod of usurpation lain any longer upon us, the fountains of relief had been quite stopped both at home and abroad, and the heir and lord of three flourishing kingdoms have wanted bread, and the common supplies of human life: for to hear, as we may from some, to how low an ebb the barbarous tyranny of his enemies had sometimes brought him, might even melt the hardest of our hearts, till they ran out at our eyes; but I shall forbear the rehearsal of such stories so full of tragedy, that they must needs spread a cloud upon the joys and festivities of this blessed day. And I would not willingly contradict my subject, and make an unseasonable discourse upon so seasonable a deliverance.

4. The fourth and last crowning property of the deliverance vouchsafed by God to the Israelites, was its absolute undeservedness. The entire cause of it was the divine goodness, but none of theirs. And therefore Moses, knowing the innate arrogance and pride of that insolent as well as undeserving people, most particularly cautions them against such flattering thoughts: "Think not," says he to them, "that God has done these great things for thee, for any righteousness of thine; for thou art a stiff-necked people," Deut. ix. 6. And again, in ver. 24, "You have been rebellious against the Lord, from the day that I knew you." So that, if there was any merit in obstinacy, any worth in ingratitude, then indeed their claim stood full and high, and of all other people upon earth they were the most meritorious.

And now, bating these good qualifications, can we allege any thing more for our deserving the deliverance here acknowledged by us, than the ungrateful and rebellious Israelites could plead for theirs? Did we so well improve ourselves under God's judgments, as to be fit for such a mercy? We saw a civil war reaping down thousands and ten thousands of our countrymen; but has it cut off so much as one of our public sins? Have not our vices grown under the sword, like trees under the pruning-hook, gathering thence only a greater luxuriance and fertility? Have we mourned and humbled ourselves, according to the greatness of the occasion? and if, peradventure, any of us have mourned, has it not been more for the effects of the war, than for the causes of it? for the ruin and the waste that it has brought upon our families and estates, rather than for the crying sins that first blew the trumpet, and drew the fatal sword to revenge God's quarrel upon us in the field?

Even self-love might fill the eyes with tears, and cover the back with sackcloth, for the untimely loss of a father, a husband, or a brother; but how many of us wept or sighed to see majesty

trampled upon, religion abused, or the sacred houses of God profaned? No; these things were but little settled in most men's thoughts; they scarce sighed or groaned for any thing but for taxes and impositions. All which considered, we were so far from meriting such an incomparable deliverance, that had God treated us according to our merits, we had never been delivered.

We have now seen the four several properties that commended and gave a value to the deliverance of the Israelites; every one of which contributed to inflame their account, and to stamp their ungrateful, provoking behaviour with a higher aggravation. And we have seen also the parallel between their deliverance and our own so exactly made out, that there is not one of these properties failing in it; for our deliverance was altogether as great, as unexpected, as seasonable, and as undeserved as theirs could be: it might vie with it in every particular.

And if that charge can be now made good against us, that the text draws up against them, of provoking God; surely our guilt must be as great as our deliverance, and every way equal the vast measures of theirs. It cannot be pleasing to rip up old sores, even to those who desire to cure them. But whether the preacher does it or no, our ingratitude will lay open and proclaim itself. Ingratitude, I say, the crying, crimson sin of this delivered nation; a sin of a universal comprehension, and, as I may so speak, the generalissimo of sins, having an influence upon all the particular sins and irregularities of our practice. And if we ask, in what the nation has been so ungrateful, it is a question best answered by another. In what has it not?

We have been harassed by a long civil war; and by a peace, under several sorts of usurpers, worse than a war. We have seen a general confusion of all ranks and degrees; and, as if the flood-gates of popular insolence had been opened, we have seen an inundation breaking in upon all, and subverting every thing above it; even from the king to the meanest gentleman; from him that commanded three kingdoms, to him that had the command but of one servant; and with the confusion of order and degree, we have seen the same also in point of property; no man was able to call any thing his own, but slavery. The honour went first, and the estate stayed not long behind. This is a summary account of the mischiefs we then groaned under.

And a merciful Providence was pleased to deliver us from every one of them. For we have had a peace at home, a peace, enabling us to make war abroad; and this under a prince of an undoubted title and an unparalleled goodness; a prince, representing God, not only in majesty, by vicegerency, as all princes do, but eminently, and beyond example, in that, his beloved attribute, that must save the world, his pardoning mercy; which he has imitated so far, even towards his bitterest enemies, that he has pardoned more and greater offences, than they themselves could, with any face or modesty, have expected.

But how has this goodness been answered? Have not pardons been followed with plots? the blessing of peace and settlement been entertained with murmurings, repinings, and reflections upon his government, not to say, upon his person also, under whose shadow they enjoy all this? Have those who have been restored to the privileges of their birthright and nobility behaved themselves with that gratitude to him, that, under God, is the fountain of honour? and have they pursued those courses that must give a lustre to titles, and ennoble nobility itself? Have those that have been restored to their estates, stretched out their hands, and opened their bowels to their indigent fellow-sufferers, who served the same master and whose fortunes fell sacrifices to the same cause; who fought with them, or rather for them; but have not these been rather neglected and scorned for their poverty, the effect of their fidelity; and at length, been even ground to powder, by that which was designed for their relief? I am afraid, if we come to be arraigned with these questions, we must be forced to plead guilty to them all.

Having thus despatched the first two things proposed from the text, to wit, the Israelites' unworthy and ungrateful behaviour towards God, upon a great deliverance, together with the aggravation of it; as also shown how much their case has been made ours, in both respects; I proceed now to

III. The third and last thing proposed from the words, namely, *the cause of this unworthy behaviour*, which was their not understanding the designs of mercy in the several instances of it: "They understood not thy wonders in Egypt." Now, in every wonderful passage of providence, two things are to be considered: 1. The author, by whom; 2. The end for which it is done: neither of which were understood by the Israelites as they ought to have been.

1. And first for the author of it. It is more than probable, that many of the Israelites ascribed most of those wonders to the skill of Moses transcending that of the Egyptian magicians, or to his working by the assistance of a higher and more potent spirit than that which assisted them. Or, in case they did believe them to have been the effects of a divine power, yet they did not inure their minds seriously to consider it, so as to have a standing awe of that power imprinted upon their hearts by such a consideration; and he that considers great and concerning matters superficially, in the language of the scripture, does not understand them.

Now I believe this will be found to have been most particularly the sin of this nation: for how many, who think atheism a piece of ingenuity, ascribe the whole passage of the king's restoration to chance and accident, or to this man's prudence or that man's miscarriage; not considering how impossible it was

for any human contrivance to lay a train of so many causes, so many accidents, so exactly, and to make so many opposite interests and cross circumstances fall into a direct and perfect subserviency to the composing this one grand work: a work so incomparably great, that, to adjudge the entire accomplishment of it to any creature under heaven, would be to rob God of the honour of one of his greatest actions, and to take the crown off from Providence, and to set it upon the head of human counsels. And then, no wonder if ingratitude for a blessing follows, where the author of it is neither understood nor acknowledged.

2. The other, and the chief thing to be considered in every wonderful deliverance, is the intent and end of it. Which surely is not, that men should forget it as soon as it is done, or turn it into wantonness, and make it minister to the excesses of pride, luxury, and intemperance. God neither dried up the sea, to bring the Israelites into a land flowing with milk and honey," that they might debauch, revel, and surfeit upon that mercy: nor did he, by a miracle as great, reinstate a company of poor, distressed exiles in the possession of their native country, that they should live at that rate of vanity and superfluity, that the world now-a-days cries out upon them for. God did not work wonders to clothe and feed a few worthless parasites with the riches of a kingdom, to fill up their cups with the blood of orphans and the tears of the widows. God did not intend that so universal a blessing, big enough for us all, should be directed under ground, into the obscure, narrow channel of a few private purses; leaving so many loyal, suffering, undone persons, to sigh and mourn over their destitute condition, in the day of a public joy. God did not restore us to scoff at religion, and to malign his church, as if the nation and the government might stand well enough without a church, but not without plays. No; surely, this was not the intent of this miraculous deliverance, whatsoever has been made the event of it. The voice of God in it calls us to humility, to industry, to temperance, to public-mindedness, to great and generous actions, for the good both of church and state. And if, instead of these, we resolve to spit in the face of mercy, by still pursuing a vain, luxurious, profane course of life, we shall find, that he who rules in the kingdoms of men, and appoints over them whomsoever he will, can turn the stream of our happiness, and destroy us after he has done us so much good.

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

## SERMON IV.

FASTING A MEANS OF SUBDUING SIN.

MATTHEW XVII. 21.

*Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.*

It was a general received command, and an acknowledged rule of practice, in all ages and places of the Christian world, that we are to "hear the church:" except only of late, since we began to be wiser than the world, and holy above the scripture; from which this text has been, as it were, dis canonized, and its authority struck out of date. But no wonder if the church then had no jurisdiction, when it had scarce so much as a being; and that men did not use to hear it, when it grew almost impossible for them to see it; and if the disciples of those days regarded not much the casting out of evil spirits, who were chiefly busied about rejecting God's ministers.

But heretofore, when men were led by the written word, and not by the *ignis fatuus* of a bold fancy, styling itself divine revelation, the church was always recognized as Christ's court here upon earth, fully empowered and commissioned from him to decide all emergent controversies, to interpret doubtful commands, and to make wholesome sanctions and institutions, as particular occasions and the circumstances of affairs, should require: that so it might appear, that the assistance of the Spirit promised to the church was not a vain thing, or a mere verb.

Now it seemed good to the primitive church, acted by the immediate guidance of the Holy Ghost, to set apart the time of our blessed Saviour's fasting and temptation in the wilderness, to be solemnized with the anniversary exercise of abstinence, and other holy austerities, for the subduing the flesh, quickening the spirit; that so we might conform to Christ, and worship the author of our religion with the devotions of imitation.

Thanks be to God, our church is lately come out of the wilderness; yet let it not cease to imitate what our Saviour did when he was there. I confess the blessed Jesus is a pattern above the imitation of mortality; fitter to terrify than to excite our endeavours; a copy to be admired, not to be transcribed. His whole life was a continued miracle: in every instance of behaviour his divinity beamed through his humanity, and every action was a cast of his omnipotence; and miracles, I acknowledge were never intended for precepts; nor is any man bound

to be omnipotent, divine, or an angel, nor to do such things as are only the effects of such perfections.

Yet even this strange, high, inimitable fasting of Christ may be stripped of the miracle, and, by due qualified proportions, found a moral duty: for though to fast forty days were miraculous, and so not at all concerning us, yet the ends of Christ's fasting, which were to enjoy a more immediate converse with God, the better to fortify himself against the temptation of the devil, and to fit himself for the execution of a great work, laid upon him by the Father; these are all common to us, according to the due abatement of degrees; and therefore, where there is some proportion in the duty, there ought to be the same in the use of the means.

Nay, we may advance the argument further, and dispute thus; That if he, who had no corruption or disorder in his nature, to weaken or betray the motions of the spirit, found it yet fit to undergo these austerities and violences to the flesh; how much more ought we, who find a continual rebellion in all our appetites, against the spiritual inclinations of the mind, to endeavour, by such religious arts, to subdue those luxuriances to the obedience of reason and the dictates of the spirit?

Let us therefore follow Christ, though at a distance; for if we may but touch the hem of our great exemplar by the small beginnings of a faithful imitation, we shall find a virtue coming out from him, to the curing of the flux of sin, and the bloody issue of the most deadly threatening corruption.

We are commanded to be like Christ, but in every likeness philosophy teaches that there are some degrees of dissimilitude; because no likeness amounts to an identity: and when he bids us "be perfect," he still intends it according to that economy of perfection that is incident to an imperfect nature. Wherefore let us not distinguish ourselves out of duty, nor make our ease our religion; but suspect that those arguments are very likely to proceed from the flesh that tend to the flesh's gratification. Though we cannot reach Christ in the miracle of the performance, yet we may follow him in the sincerity of the attempt.

Certain it is, from the united testimony of many of the most experienced followers of Christ, that these abstinencies and sour rudiments of self-denial have a signal influence, both to the procuring of mercies, and to the removal of impending judgments.

He that thus hungers is sure to be filled. Fasting may prevent starving, and wearing sackcloth for a while keep us from wearing it all our days. It is able to reverse a decree, and to remand the word out of God's mouth. Ahab himself found it so; and what rewards may we hope for to a true, when so great did attend even the forced abstinencies of an unsound repentance?

As for the words: it is much doubted by expositors, what kind of evil spirit is here intended by our Saviour, which he affirms not to be dispossessed but by prayer and fasting. Some un-

derstand it generally of all evil spirits, contrary to the express letter and sense of the place. Others of an evil spirit of a peculiar and extraordinary fierceness. But others, more appositely and judiciously, interpret it of an evil spirit having had long and inveterate possession of the party, out of whom it was cast ; which appears from Mark ix. ; where the spirit is said to have possessed him, *παιδιόθεν*, “ even from a child.”

I shall now, by a parallel application, improve the words beyond this particular occasion to their general reason, and extend what was here spoken of, the casting out the devil as to his person, to an ejection of him as to his works. And whereas the duty of fasting is extraordinary, and a proper instrument to advance the heights and fervours of prayer ; the sense of the words, as improvable into a standing perpetual precept, is this :

That there are some corruptions and vices which, partly by reason of a strong situation in our temper and constitution, partly by habit, custom, and inveterate continuance, grow so sturdy, and have so firm a hold of us, that they cannot be subdued and conquered, and thoroughly dispossessed, but with the greatest ardour and constancy of prayer, joined with the harshest severities of mortification.

This therefore is the genuine sense of the words : in which there are these two parts :

1st. An intimation of a peculiar duty : prayer and fasting.

2dly. The end and design of it ; which is to eject and dispossess the unclean spirit.

These are the parts of the text, the entire discussion of which I shall manage in these three particulars.

I. To take a survey of the extent of this text.

II. To show the due qualifications of it, that render it both acceptable to God, and efficacious to ourselves.

III. To show how it comes to have such an influence, in dispossessing the evil spirit and subduing our corruptions.

I. For the first of these ; this duty of fasting admits of several kinds and degrees ; for in fasting as well as feasting we may find variety.

1. The first kind is of constant, universal exercise. Universal, both because it obliges at all times, and extends to all persons. And this is nothing but a temperate, sober, and restrained use of the creature, in abridging the appetites of nature for the designs of religion ; in bringing liberty to the love of reason ; and contracting the latitude of things lawful into the narrower compass of expedients.

He that ventures to the utmost verge of his Christian liberty stands upon a precipice ; the utmost bounds of lawful are the borders and immediate confines of unlawful. And when the devil thus sets a man upon a pinnacle, he may be sure

that he hath designed him for a temptation. To dwell near the sin, without sometimes stepping into it, is very hard. Neighbourhood is still the occasion of visits.

Upon this cause Christ has placed the spirit and soul of his religion in self-denial, and a renouncing the pleasures, softnesses, and caresses of worldly delights; as knowing, though pleasure and a full enjoyment is in itself not evil, yet such is the weakness of our nature, that it fails and melts under the encounter; and by its very enjoyments is betrayed into the snares of sin and the regions of death.

It is lawful for us to feast with Job's sons, yet feasting may sometimes pull the house about our ears. When Ammon's heart is merry with wine, then the ambush is ready to rise and strike him. Fulness of bread was the occasion of Sodom's sin, and Sodom's sin was the occasion of its destruction. Temperance, therefore, the only easy and constant fast, is the great duty of a Christian life: a sure and sovereign instrument of mortification.

And whosoever struggles with any unruly corruption, will perhaps find, that the constant turn of a well guided abstinence will, in the issue, give a surer despatch to it, than those extraordinary instances of total abstinence and higher severities, only undertaken for a time. As a land flood, it carries a bigger stream and comes with a mightier force and noise, yet presently dries up and disappears; but the emissions of a fountain, though gentle and silent, yet are constant and perpetual; and whereas the other, being gone, leaves nothing behind it but slime and mud, this, wheresoever it flows, gently soaks into verdure and fertility.

This constant temperance, therefore, is by all means intended by the rules of Christianity; the constancy of which, running through our whole lives, makes abstinence our diet, and fasting our meat and drink.

We used to say, "a good conscience is a continual feast;" but, surely, it is in a great measure the effect and product of such a continual fast. Wherefore, let us still secure ourselves by the guards of a temperate and reserved sobriety; remembering that it was the sop that slid the devil into Judas, and the glutton that ushered in the traitor: and that, in all spiritual surprises, it is the bait that is most likely to betray us to the hook.

2. The second kind of fast, is the fast of a total abstinence, when for some time we wholly abstain from all bodily repasts. This is the highest kind, and therefore in ordinary speech, has engrossed the name of fast only to itself, as the name of the whole kind is not unusually confined to the principal member of the division.

We have instances of this frequently in the Old Testament and in the New; in the disciples of John, in Cornelius, and



others. And it is not to be questioned, but that this is the fast chiefly intended in the words of the text; that great instrument to exorcise and drive out the evil spirit from a defiled and a possessed heart.

Every remedy is successful according to the proportion it bears to the distemper: and certainly a cure is not likely to be wrought where an ordinary remedy encounters an extraordinary disease; where the plaster is narrow and the wound broad. Temperance is good, but that is to be our continual diet; and surely, that man is not like to recover who makes his food his physic. Where the humour is strong and predominant, there the prescription must be rugged, and the evacuation violent. We must leave the road of nature when nature itself is disordered, and the principles of life in danger.

Possibly a man may have a transient disrelish and loathing of his sin; but have these loathings rested only in thought, or have they improved into contrary resolutions? Suppose they have, and a man has fully resolved against his sin, yet has he watered those resolutions with prayers and tears, the great conveyance of that strength which alone can actuate the resolutions? Admit also, that he may have prayed and humbled himself before God, yet still perhaps his corruption is vigorous, and snaps asunder all his resolutions, tramples upon his prayers, and triumphs over his tears and repentances, upon the periodical returns of a temptation, or the critical workings of a bad temper.

Why, now the reason of this unconquered activity of his sin, after all these courses taken against it, may be because the place of its strength is yet untouched. Its lock is only hampered, and not cut off by a thorough removal of the fuel and materials of concupiscence, in a severe abstinence from things sometimes necessary; for a distempered stomach will digest aliment into poison.

To eat and to drink is necessary; but even necessity must give place to extremity. And the physician is merciful, if he pines his patient into a recovery. In this case we encounter sin in the body, like a besieged enemy: and such a one, when he has once engarrisoned himself in a strong hold, will endure a storm and repel assaults: you must cut off his supplies of provision, and never think to win the fort, till hunger breaks through the walls, and starves him into a surrender.

3. The third kind of fast is an abstinence from bodily refreshments, in respect of a certain sort or degree, and that undertaken for some space of time; such as is this quadragesimal solemnity; in which for the space of some weeks, the church has, in some select days, enjoined a total abstinence from flesh, and a more restrained use of other refreshments.

I am not ignorant that the same obligation comes also from the civil magistrate, and that for secular ends; yet I see not why

there may not be a friendly correspondence between both these ; or why one should be thought to exclude the other, which it only confirms : certainly a law ought not to be the weaker for being enacted by a double authority.

I know also, that the celebration of this solemnity is much controverted ; but then it is by those who doubt as much whether they ought to obey the magistrate, and to renounce the principles of religion. But just as in the apostles' times, so in ours also, the church has been troubled with disputes concerning meats ; and whether it be lawful to oblige men, under the gospel, in the use of things in their nature indifferent.

Some, who would be reforming while they should be obeying, who are too holy to need fasting, have too much of the spirit to stand in fear of the flesh ; and who still express God's mercies by "marrow and fatness," and such other expressions, as please their palate, and leave a relish upon the tongue that speaks them, so that they cannot be so properly said to preach sermons as dinners : of which they put their auditors in mind long before they have done. These, I say, will hear of nothing but of liberty ; they must have elbow-room at their meat : and as for Lent, they defy it ; it is popish, antichristian, and idolatrous : and so, their conscience being fallen into their stomach, what one finds troublesome, the other easily concludes superstitious.

But who shall be judges and arbitrators in this case ? The scripture, which is to be the rule, is the same, and open to the allegation of both parties. But who shall interpret and apply this rule ? Now, in every science and profession, the most rational way to resolve doubts arising in it, has been, either to consult with all, or most of the professors of it ; or with some that are most eminent for their skill and knowledge in it.

Of the first sort, in matters of Christianity, we have the church of God congregated in councils ; of the second, we have those ancient writers, famous in their ages for their profound acquaintance with evangelical mysteries, whom we call *fathers* : let us therefore see the judgment of both these, in this particular.

For councils, I shall mention one for all ; the council of Nice, in which we find both mention and approbation of this quadragesimal fast. Add to this the canons of the apostles : in the 68th of which we read the institution of the same ; which canons, though they were not written by the apostles themselves yet they are of great, undoubted antiquity, and consequently of no less authority in the several ages of the church.

As for the suffrages of the fathers ; I could bring St. Basil and St. Chrysostom, of the Greek church ; St. Austin and St. Jerome, the two great luminaries of the Latin.

Of which St. Austin, in his 119th epistle to Januarius, has these words : "Quadragesima sane jejuniorum habet autoritatem

et in veteribus libris et in evangelio." And St. Jerome, in his epistle to Marcella, delivers his mind to the same purpose: "Nos unam quadragesimam, secundum traditionem apostolorum, toto anno, tempore nobis congruo jejunamus." Also in his Comment upon Isaiah lviii., he speaks to the like intent: "Dominus diebus quadraginta in solitudine jejunavit, ut nobis solennes jejuniorum dies relinqueret."

I do not desire to multiply quotations, but had rather weigh than number them; and therefore these shall be sufficient.

And now let any one judge, whether it is fitter for us to steer our practice according to the ducture of the universal church, or the broken voice of a particular faction, compared to that, both small in number and inconsiderable in qualification? Must the gray hairs of antiquity bow down to the upstart appearance of novelty? especially since the same faction that decry fasting in Lent, have publicly kept a national fast upon the day of Christ's nativity, in the year 1645; the first fast that was kept by Christians on that day since Christianity saw the sun: but, it seems, Christianity and reformation are two things.

They talk of reforming, and of coming out of Egypt, as they call it; but still, though they leave Egypt, they will be sure to hold fast to their flesh-pots. And the truth is, their very fasts and humiliation have been observed to be nothing else but a religious epicurism, and a neat contrivance of luxury: while they forbear dinner, only that they may treble their supper; and fast in the day, like the evening wolves, to whet their stomachs against night.

But these principles and practices are too rank for the strict, pure, and mortifying severities of Christianity. Let us, therefore, poor mortals, who dare not be perfect above our example, content ourselves to follow our great Master, and not be ashamed to be deceived with the universal church.

And truly, he that with spiritual design and prudent usage shall manage this religious solemnity, as with Christ he may be said to fast, so with Christ also he may conquer the tempter. And let all schisms, and factions, and pretended reformers, ring about his ears peals of popery, will-worship, and superstition; yet still, like Christ in the wilderness, he may converse with God, though his abode be amongst such wild beasts.

And thus I have despatched the first general head of this discourse; which was to show the extent and latitude of this duty of fasting, in the several sorts and kinds of it: I must now close up what I have spoken upon this subject with this cautional observation:

That in the whole economy of the gospel, mercy is predominant; and therefore the rigour of every precept is to be sweetened and reduced to this standing rule, as the vital reason running through every evangelical institution. We cannot but allow the great legislator of the new law to carry things with so much

equity and evenness, as to fix upon the same law a different proportion of obligation, according to different tempers and occasions.

Now what Christ said upon another occasion may be said also of fasting: "Every one cannot receive this saying." There may be a poison in abstinence, as well as in meats; and when natural weakness and infirmity will not reach the sweetness and perfection of the precept, it is the genius of the gospel to relax, and not to urge sacrifice, standing in competition with mercy.

Certainly he, that would make the rigours of the sabbath give way to the pulling of an ox or a sheep out of the ditch, would not now ruin a man, for whom even the sabbath was made, only to spare one of those. Where the performance depends upon a power rare and singular, it is there hard to make the duty universal. We know the body is subservient to the uses of the soul; but Christ never destroys one to save the other; nor bids any one put the knife to his throat so as to kill himself. We must distinguish between murder and mortification. Christ commands no man to be a skeleton, or a walking ghost, or to throw away his health, in order to his salvation. A catarrh or a consumption is no man's duty: self-denial may be a duty; but I am sure self-murder is a sin.

A potion may be sovereign and excellent, but not therefore to be equally administered to all. No application can be successful, but what is managed with caution: and where there is caution, there must be distinction. Every vessel is not alike fit for new wine: an old, crazy cask betrays its burden, and sinks under the vigour and spirituous emanations of too generous a liquor.

There is no soul but may pray, and be pious; but there are many bodies that cannot fast. It were a sad thing, if a man should be forced to make his table-cloth his winding-sheet, and his poison his religion. No, undoubtedly; all the injunctions of Christ carry in them nothing but sweetness, convenience, and a tender compliance with the necessities and frailties of human nature.

The weakness of some tempers perform upon them the very same effects that fasting works upon others; and therefore those severities, which in others would be only an abridgment of their luxury, would in them be an entrenchment upon their being; and not only cut short their pleasure, but their very existence.

As soon as Jesus Christ had raised one from the dead, we read that "he commanded something to be given her to eat," Mark iv. 43. And I am confident, the severity of no institution could have induced him, at that time, to have bid her fast, unless he only raised her from the state of death, that he might send her to it again.

The height of prudence is, in all precepts, laws, and institutions, to distinguish persons, times, and occasions, and accordingly

to discriminate the obligation ; and upon the same exigence of justice to dispense with it in some, upon which it confirms it in others. And prudence is but one part of Christianity, which takes in all moral virtues with advantage and addition ; and what is absurd in the sanctions of right reason, will never be warranted by the rules of religion. Wherefore, as to the matter in hand, I shall comprise all in this one word : Let the observation of this solemn time be so strict, as not to bend to any man's luxury ; so dispensable, as not to grate upon his infirmity.

II. I come now to the second general head proposed for the discussion of this subject ; which is to show, what are *the qualifications that must render this duty of fasting both acceptable to God, and efficacious to this great purpose.*

To give men a right information concerning which, I think to be a matter of very great moment ; as perceiving that men egregiously abuse themselves in the practice of this duty, spoiling it with strange apprehensions, and loading it with many foreign and preternatural strictnesses, for which they will one day receive but small thanks, either from God or from themselves. The truth is, the sum of all their miscarriage about it seems to lie in this, that they depress it into a bodily exercise ; which the apostle affirms to "profit little ;" while they acquiesce barely in this, that they have fasted so long, or so often ; not at all considering in what manner or to what end : whereas, indeed, the former is but the mere bulk and rude draught of this duty ; and these latter only stamp it divine, and make it spiritual.

Wherefore I shall lay down four conditions or properties, without a joint concurrence of all which, this duty of fasting can neither be pleasing to God, nor effectual to dispossess the unclean spirit, in the mortification of any strong corruption.

1. The first is, that it is to be used, not as a duty either necessary or valuable for itself, but only as an instrument. There are some duties that carry in them an absolute necessity ; as being founded upon the necessary relation that the creature bears towards God, in respect of its being created by him, and its depending upon him ; as also upon the relation that one creature bears towards another, arising from their natural equality and cognation.

Of the first sort are our loving God, adoring him, adhering to him, with the utmost exertion of all the powers and faculties of the soul ; demeaning ourselves with that humility and prostration of spirit, that becomes poor shadows before self-sufficiency, weakness before omnipotence ; a creature of yesterday, and but for a day, before him who is from everlasting to everlasting. In short, as it becomes a man to behave himself towards that divine power, from the arbitrary disposals of whose pleasure he first received his breath, and still holds his being.

Of the second sort are all the duties we owe to our neighbour, in the rank and condition our creation has placed us. As, that we bear a benign affection towards him; entertain a concernment for him; upon all occasions advance his good and emolument; by no means entrench upon his happiness, by defrauding, slandering, defiling, or any ways circumventing those whom God has joined with us in the society and common ligaments of nature and humanity.

Now all these actions, with their respective branches and further improvements, are indispensably requisite, as parts of God's image in us; and without which the decorum and offices of that station which every man holds, both towards God and his fellow creatures, cannot be sustained. These, therefore, are the principal duties, and chief pillars of morality; and whatever becomes necessary over and above these, it is so only by way of supply and assistance, as helps and arts to promote the soul's progress in these grand instances of duty.

For we must observe, that there is not only in the mind of man an ingenite sense of *turpe* and *honestum*, that constantly inclines him to the practice of such virtuous actions, but also a strong inclination of appetite, that, like a constant *remora*, stops and impedes the virtuous principle; and withal, like a bias, sways and carries him to what is vicious and irregular.

Upon this ground it is, that to quicken the soul in a course of virtue, we must *removere prohibens*, and weaken the contrary principle of the sensitive appetite, which clogs and oppresses the other in all its due operations. Now, since the seat of this appetite is the body, according to the various disposition of which, that becomes either lively or faint in its workings, it follows, that we must lay siege to this, and begin the assault here, as that great apostle and artist in the ways of holiness did before us, 1 Cor. ix. 27, "I keep under my body, lest, having preached to others, I myself should become a castaway."

How this can be effected surer and better than by fasting, not only Christianity, but reason itself is yet to seek. It is this that curbs nature, circumscribes appetite, restrains the gaiety and exorbitance of desire, stops the career of luxury, by taking off its wheels.

He, whose nature is reduced and kept low by the disciplines of religion, is neither a slave to the suggestions of lust, pride, or idleness; their innate fuel is extinguished; and so all their proposals easily vanish, finding nothing to fasten upon. They are so far from being victorious, that to such a one they are scarce troublesome. He is so far from being subject to their tyranny, that he is not so much as vexed with their importunity.

Now, by all that has been said it appears, that fasting is required, not as a virtue but as a help to virtue; and that by controlling its hindrance, removing its impediments, subduing the

emulations of a contrary principle, and so enabling it to act with freedom. Otherwise, were there no reluctance from the inferior appetites against a virtuous and a pious course, these arts and stratagems against the flesh would be superfluous, and we should have no more need of fasting than the angels or the blessed spirits have of eating. Could the mariner sail with as much ease and safety in a storm, as he does in a calm, he would never empty or unlade his vessel.

Would a full luxuriant body subserve the ends and execute the commands of the spirit, with as much readiness and agility as one that is disciplined to such compliances with hunger and hardship; God, who takes no delight to afflict the children of men, you may be sure would not command us to afflict ourselves; certainly no abstinence would be then more our duty, than to abstain from fasting.

For is there any excellency in the thing itself to commend it to God? Does fasting perfume our sighs, or add a fragrantcy to our prayers? Are the *jejunia sabbatariorum* sacrifices of so sweet a savour to the Almighty, that the offerings of justice, piety, and mercy, would be nothing valued by him, without the mixture of such incense?

Nay, let me add this one consideration; that fasting, as such, considered barely in itself, is so far from being of any value in the sight of God, that it is indeed an evil; not morally, I confess, but naturally; for whatsoever grieves or afflicts nature is an evil to it, and consequently fasting, being such a one, would never be allowed, much less commanded by God, if it were not sanctified by its subserviency to a moral good.

Let this therefore be fixed upon, that fasting is neither commanded, nor to be used, but merely as a spiritual instrument. And since it is the nature of all instruments to receive their value and worth from their fitness to produce those effects to which they are designed, I believe it would be no hard matter to unravel and run through most of the pompous austerities and fastings of many religious operators and splendid justiciaries.

Some of which neither know or design any other religion in this duty, but only that at such and such a time they forbore flesh, and made their meal of fish, which perhaps also they loved better. This, they think, is a notable piece of service to God; and so they rise from the table with their blind besotted consciences as much applauding them, as if they had risen from a well-performed prayer.

But may I not say to such a one, Thou hypocrite! does God receive any honour at all from this? or does it at all discriminate thee from the epicure in his account, or in the final sentence that he shall pass upon both hereafter? May not he that eats fish and he that eats flesh go to the same place of damnation, as well as the fish and flesh that they eat be served up to the same table?

Is there any spiritual design carried on in this abstinence? Is the ruin of any vice driven at; the working of any corruption undermined and defeated by this means? These are the things that God looks at and requires, and which the very nature of the duty suggests; and without which it is but the carcass of a duty; dead and noisome; detestable before God, and irrational in itself.

2. The second condition of a religious fast is, that it be done with a hearty detestation of the body of sin, for the weakening of which it is designed. Whosoever duly undertakes a fast, by the very nature of the duty is actually engaged in a war against his sin; and who ever fought valiantly against him whom he did not first hate heartily?

If we have not first wrought our minds to a settled dislike and a bitter disgust of sin as our mortal enemy, all our attempts against it will be faint and heartless, our mortifications treacherous, and our fastings frustraneous; much like David's sending an army against Absalom with a design to save him, and to deal with him gently. It will be only an alarm to sin to put itself into a posture of defence, to retreat further into the soul, and there to rally together its strengths, and to secure itself by a firmer possession.

It is most certain, that in the same degree that sin is amiable to us, our fast is odious to God, and looked upon by him only as a more solemn mockery and religious provocation.

It is not a mournful expression, a solemn dress, or a thin table, that God so much regards. It is the heart, and not the stomach, that he would have empty; and, therefore, if a man carries a luxurious soul in a pining body, or the aspiring mind of a Lucifer in the hanging head of a bulrush, he fasts only to upbraid his Maker, and to disgrace his religion, and to heighten his final reckoning, till he becomes ten times more the son of perdition, than those who own their inward love of sin, by the open undissembled enmities of a suitable behaviour.

Let us not deceive ourselves, nor take an estimate of our duty by false measures and fallacious judgments. He that obeys the injunctions of the church, that executes upon himself the afflicting rigours of external abstinences, he does well; but he has not therefore done all. Let him not count himself to have fasted to any purpose, if by it he has not got ground of his corruption, in some measure supplanted his sin, and estranged his affections from the beloved embraces of sinful objects.

But if, after all these spiritual arts and severities, the love of sin continues yet active and entire, let him assure himself, that his fasting will have no other effect upon him, than to send him back to the repeated practice of what he loves, with a fiercer and a keener appetite. The vicissitudes of restraint will only endear the returns of the enjoyment, and draw forth the desires of a quicker and more inflamed inclination.



He, therefore, that would manage this duty to his great and spiritual advantage, let him draw his eye from his table, and turn it unto his soul: let him overlook the spare furniture of one, and see whether there be not large provision laid up for lust in the other. Does he find any vile unmortified desire in his heart? let him extinguish it: any sin in his hands? let him remove it: any blot upon his conscience? let him wash it out in the great laver of souls, the blood of Christ, conveyed to him by a true repentance.

But if these things are not the matter of his care, if he only forbears his meat, and not his sin, let such a one know, that the beasts of Nineveh kept as good a fast as he.

Add to all this, that the love of sin cherished in the heart, makes fasting not only an impious, but also an unseemly practice. A man's behaviour contradicts his designs: the duty does not set well upon him; it neither suits nor squares with his condition. In short, it is as improper and absurd to come to a fast with a foul heart, as to a feast with foul hands.

3. The third condition of a duly qualified fast is, that it be quickened and enlivened with prayer. The truth is, one of the greatest designs of this duty is, to be an opportunity of prayer, which is never performed with greater fervency, activity of spirit, and restlessness of importunity, than when nature is abridged, the humours of the body low, and consequently the avocations that it suggests to the mind small and conquerable.

Prayer is a duty running through all the periods and offices of our lives, but the days of fasting are properly the time of its solemnity. They are, as I may so say, the festivals of devotion. Prayer, joined with fasting, is like "an apple of gold set off with a picture of silver." Now we have it at its best advantage; it shines bright, and it flames pure, like fire without the incumbrances of smoke, or the allay of contrary blasts.

And in the management of so great a duty, to be silent and obstinate, to have no petition to prefer, what is it but to transact the whole religion of the fast with our teeth? with a temper inferior to the ox and the brute animals, who low in their hunger, and speak aloud their wants to the hand that feeds them.

Nay, the very reason of a fast seems to require the society of prayer, for it must needs be undertaken either for the procuring of some good, or the deprecation of some evil: and is there any way appointed, either by God or nature, to represent the wants and grievances of our condition to heaven but by petition? by the solicitations of prayer, a duty whose strange and never-failing successes in all its holy contests with the Almighty have rendered it not only acceptable, but also invincible?

And, to add example to reason, what saint almost do we find in scripture, whose prayers did not attend their fasts? Ezra and Nehemiah, David and Daniel took this course; and, doubtless,

while David's "knees were weak through fasting," as he expresses it in Psalm cix. 24, they were also employed in kneeling.

One would think, that in this performance the actings of grace might imitate the workings of nature; for is there any thing so proper to hunger as craving, or to a fast as supplication?

But where I enforce the conjunction of prayer with fasting, people must not think, that by prayer is meant a formal, customary attendance upon the offices of the church, undertaken only out of a sordid fear of the eye of man, and then performed with weariness and irreverence, with seldom access, and more seldom devotion: of the duties of which persons I may say this, that if filth could be defiled, their prayers would defile their fastings, and their fastings their prayers; so that the joining of one to the other, would be nothing else than the offering up of carion with the fumes and incense of a dunghill.

4. The fourth condition of a truly religious fast is, that it be attended with alms and works of charity. Amongst our other emptinesses, the evacuation of the purse is proper to this solemnity; and he that inflicts a thorough penance upon this, stops the fountain of luxury, and the opportunities of extravagance.

Charity is the grand seasonage of every Christian duty: it gives it a gloss in the sight of God, and a value in the sense of men; and he fasts properly, whose fast is the poor man's feast; whose abstinence is another's abundance.

In Isaiah viii. 4—7, God roundly tells his people what was truly a fast, and what was no fast in his esteem; not to abstain from bread, but to "deal it to the hungry:" this is properly to fast; not to wrap ourselves in sackcloth, but to cover and clothe our naked brother; this is to be humbled.

To what purpose did the pharisees fast twice a week, when they stayed their stomachs with devouring widows' houses? solemnizing all their humiliations with the poor man's groans, and the orphan's tears? To what spiritual intent did our zealots so much exercise themselves in this duty, when, as the prophet's expression is in the same fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah, they fasted for violence, and to fight with the fist of oppression, only that they might plunder and pillage with success; that they might make poor for others to relieve, and so provide objects for other men's charity, instead of exercising their own?

But if the constant practice of the church may have any weight with us to determine our practice, we shall find, that works of charity were always looked upon as a proper appendage, if not also an integral part of this duty. In the same place that we read of Cornelius's fasting, we find it ushered in with its two great supporters, prayers and alms.

And the truth is, if we may compare these two together, alms have so much the preeminence above prayer, that one is a begging of God, the other is a lending to him.

I have now assigned those conditions that I think are both necessary and sufficient to render our fastings effectual to this great end of dispossessing and throwing out the evil spirit.

I confess I have not mentioned the popish austerities of whippings, pilgrimages, and going barefoot, with twenty other such tricks (for they are no better) which they prescribe and use upon these solemnities. For if they were indeed of such sovereign force to help the soul in the practices of virtue, what is the reason that the scripture affords us not one instance of any saint that ever took this course? The pharisees indeed disfigured and mangled themselves, and treated their bodies much after the same manner, till they made themselves more deformed in the eyes of God, than in the eyes of men.

Other examples besides these I know none; neither will reason supply the defects of tradition, or afford any solid argument to prove that the evil spirit may be driven out of the soul as the money-changers were out of the temple, with whips and scourges. The devil does not always go, when such weapons drive.

Those, indeed, whose religion lies no deeper than their skin, may whip themselves holy, and owe their progress in virtue to the slash and the whiplash; but surely there are none, who have not enslaved their intellectuals by an implicit faith and tamely resigned themselves first to be deceived, and then to be ruled by impostors, who do not look upon all these carnal assistances of the spirit, as no better than the mortifications of the galleys, or the devotions of the whipping-post.

III. I come now to the third and last general head, which is to show *how this duty of fasting comes to have such a peculiar influence in dispossessing the evil spirit, and subduing our corruptions.*

And here, first by way of denial, we must observe, that it does not effect this work upon the soul,

1st. Either, first, by any casual force naturally inherent in itself; for if it did, fasting would certainly and constantly have this effect upon every man that used it; the contrary of which is undeniably manifest from experience. For how many thousands, after all these abridgements, find their corruptions recoil upon them with as great a force and fury as ever, their sinful appetites being not at all abated, but rather exasperated and renewed? Which shows, that the bare performance is in itself but a weak, unactive thing, and effects nothing but in the virtue of a superior power, which sometimes co-operates with, sometimes deserts the exercise of this duty.

2dly. Neither does fasting effect this great change upon us by way of merit, as procuring and engaging the help of that grace that does effect it: for besides that, it is upon irrefragable grounds of reason evident, that it is impossible for a created

nature to merit any thing from God by way of reward. So there is over and above a peculiar poorness and vileness in this action that degrades it to infinite distances and disproportions, from being able to challenge, at the hands of God, the dispensations of that grace upon which so much depends the weight and moments of eternal glory.

In the next place, therefore, to show positively from whence this duty derives this great virtue.

1. It receives it from divine institution. Whatsoever God ordains by his word, he usually owns by his assistance; and therefore, in every thing made a duty by his command, if we bring but endeavour, he will undertake for the success. It is the concernment of his honour to make his ordinances considerable; and this is done by making them conduits and conveyances of such a power as may advance them above themselves to be instrumental to great and spiritual purposes.

Thus, when Moses fetched water out of the rock with a stroke of his rod, we are not to imagine that the rod did it by any force inherent in itself; but God, having appointed it for such a work, was pleased to attend it with a miraculous effect, and so to credit his institution with the exercise of his omnipotence.

2. Fasting comes to be effectual to dispossess the evil spirit, by being a direct defiance to that disposition of body and mind upon which especially he works.

(1.) For the body. The devil never finds it so pliable to his motions, so instrumental to his designs, as when it is pampered and luxuriant. It is then like a strong liquor, it receives the infusions of poison more intimately and deeply, and diffuses the same with stronger and more insinuating communications.

But a body subdued with abstinence, it is to the evil spirit like an unfurnished house; and then we know, that though there is no violence used to drive out an inhabitant, yet bad accommodations will make him dislodge.

(2.) For the mind. This is a singular corrective of that pride and garishness of temper, that renders it impatient of the sobrieties of virtue; but open to all the wild suggestions of fancy, and the impressions of vice.

Now, I say, fasting gives a wound to this disposition in a double respect.

1st. That it is a notable act of self-revenge; and self is the only lawful object of revenge. Paul reckons this amongst the heroic performances of an extraordinary repentance. 2 Cor. vii. 11: "What care, what zeal has it wrought, nay, what revenge!"

A man by this does as it were retaliate an evil to the author, and by defrauding himself, he does *fallere fallentem*, which certainly is a pious fraud. It speaks a man hugely in earnest, and intent upon the work of mortification: for of all things in the

world, revenge is never in jest ; but in returning an evil, it always repays the principal with interest and advantage.

2dly. Fasting corrects and brings down this ill temper of mind, by being an act of self-abasement and prostration. A man by this in a manner awards upon himself the very judgments which he deprecates. He acknowledges a forfeit of all God's creatures, and therefore he neither touches nor tastes, lest in every morsel he should thief and usurp ; being by sin, as it were, an outlaw to the common issues of providence.

Now the end of God's judgments is not so much to revenge as to convince, and to lay a man low in the apprehensions of his own wretchedness. Wherefore, if a man thus judges himself, and not only kisses the rod, but also inflicts it with his own hand, he by this takes the work out of God's, and makes an affliction superfluous by anticipating its effect.

Much more might be spoken of this subject ; but when we have taken all those courses to eject the evil spirit, we must still remember, that it is to be the work of God himself, whom the blessed spirits adore, and whom the evil obey.

To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

## SERMON V.

THE NECESSITY OF IMMEDIATE REPENTANCE.

REVELATION II. 16.

*Repent; or I will come unto thee quickly: and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*

REFLECTING upon these many and strange methods by which sin prevails upon man's will, collected from an ordinary experience and survey of the practices of the world, compared with the infallible verdict of the scriptures; and amongst the rest, of that signal place in Deut. xxix. 19, which presents to us one blessing himself, and saying, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imaginations of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst:" I have, upon such reflections, not without some amazement, considered what should be the ground upon which rational discerning men can satisfy and speak peace to their consciences in the very career of those sins, the commission of which, even by the confession of those that commit them, leads to assured perdition.

As for that peace that springs from a refined well-contrived hypocrisy, that is wholly of another nature; for where there is some restraint of sin coloured over with some superficial varnish of duty, considering the weakness of man's understanding, and the treachery of his will, it is no wonder that such a peace is easily attainable; nay, that it is very hardly avoidable. But here, where sin is let loose to its full uncontrolled course, so that men lie and wallow in a free and palpable perpetration of it, even arising to the height of this expression, "to add drunkenness to thirst;" that is, as some expound it, the outward commission of sin to the inward desire; or, as others, a perpetual continued glut and surfeit in sin. As the abused satisfaction of thirst causes drunkenness, and drunkenness again provokes thirst, men never more liberally call for their cups, than when they have too liberally taken them already.

I say, that any one should find peace in such a course, this seems prodigious, and did not scripture and experience overrule the disputes of reason, almost incredible. But since there is no human action or course without some cause, it will be expedient to inquire what may be the cause of this. And one would think, that the cause that any man can be jocund and fully satisfied in the eager pursuit of known sins, must of necessity be one of these three:

1st. That he is ignorant of the curse that attends his sin; and

so no wonder, if blindness produces boldness: for he that is blind may not only accidentally fall, but soberly go into the ditch. But this cannot be here the cause; for he that thus blesses himself, is said in the former part of the verse to do so after he had heard "the words of this curse." A curse plain enough, and large enough, filling all the foregoing chapter, one of the longest in the bible. So that if terror set home with evidence, or evidence edged with terror, could convince, ignorance was here unpleadable. The broad light of the word beat full in his face, the discovery was clear, and the conviction unavoidable; and therefore ignorance could not be the cause.

2dly. A second cause might be unbelief: he might know the curse, and yet not believe it; and so, not being believed, it could not control his comforts. For though apprehension brings the object to the mind, yet it is belief only that lets it in. But neither can this be always the cause; for certainly no man is so improved in sin, as to transcend the devil, who, as the schoolmen say, stands *confirmatus in summâ malitiâ*: and yet he believes, and that even to trembling. He knows and believes that he shall be tormented to the utmost extent of the very least tittle and jot of all God's threatenings, and yet he sins with a most resolved, implacable purpose; nay, he therefore sins, because he knows and believes it. Wherefore audacious sinning is not always founded upon infidelity.

3dly. But thirdly, though he knows and believes the curse, yet perhaps, he relaxes nothing of his sin, because he resolves to bear it; and has wrought himself into that hardiness and courage, as to think that he can weather out the storms of God's wrath, and stand the shock of eternal vengeance; and, like Scævola, with the same hand and sturdiness endure the shame with which he committed sin.

But alas! where lives that man that can thus reason, either sober or in his wits? The principles of our nature will not bear it. Belshazzar had as much of power, and of drink withal, to raise him to bid defiance to God, as any ruffian under heaven; and yet when God, as it were, lift but up his finger against him, how poorly did he crouch and shiver! how did his joints loose, and his knees knock together! So that if he felt God's hand so intolerable, when it did but write, what would he find it when it should inflict the sentence. And therefore neither can this be the reason.

But now, if men both apprehend the curse, and believe the truth of it, and withal confess their utter inability to contest with it; what can be the reason that any man can, with a contented mind and a daring hand, proceed in such a strain of rebellion; believing, and yet despising the curse, fearing its weight, and yet defying the event? Why, the reason, I conceive, in short, is a presuming confidence of a future repentance.

This is the great mysterious engine of sin, that turns about the world, that reconciles all the contradictions of interest and religion, that solves all doubts, cuts off all demurs, that can assure a Balaam he shall "die the death of the righteous," though he lives upon the wages of iniquity. It is this only that presents sin in some respect rational; that can make even conscience itself sign and seal the petitions of the basest appetite. In short, it works wonders: it unites the joys of heaven and the pleasures of sin; the promises of God and the precepts of the devil.

I shall not enforce this by any other probation, but by appealing to every man's own conscience; sending him to reflect upon himself, and to consider the temper of his spirit, the inward reasonings and debates of his mind, when he is allured to do any thing, of the unlawfulness of which he stands clearly convinced, whether he is not drawn forth to the actual commission of it, by presuming upon impunity, through the interposals of an after-repentance.

For if conscience startles and flies back, and dreads the apple of the temptation, because God's word is peremptory, "He that eats shall die?" future repentance stands forth and supplies the room, and retorts the answer of the devil, "Thou shalt not surely die;" nay, thou mayest repent, and surely live. So that repentance being now stamped as current as perfect obedience, this argument is heightened much beyond what that of the devil was then capable of; because, indefinitely, without any restriction of time or person, God's promise of life to the penitent stands clear and irreversible.

Now what can speak more home and full to a man's desires, and, in a great measure to his reason, than that which encourages him to crop the present sweets of sin, by giving him security against the future smart? Let the wine be never so poisonous, a man may safely drink it, when he has not only an appetite for its sweetness, but also an antidote against its poison.

This, this therefore is the very hinge upon which the whole persuasive force of sin turns and depends; the only temptation that seems unanswerable. Others, indeed, may allure; this alone argues a man into sin. And I desire to leave this with you, as an observation infallibly true, that were it not for the persuasions of a future repentance, a knowing man could scarce ever be brought to sin against his conscience.

But now if this be overthrown, and proved to be both absurd and dangerous, as I hope some part of the ensuing discourse shall do, with clear undeniable evidence, then all other temptations, that are but the mere appendices of this, will fall and vanish of themselves: as by confuting the main hypothesis of an opinion, all other arguments by consequence drawn from thence, are also by consequence confuted.



Now the face of these words is directly set against this soul-devouring imposture of a deferred repentance. The words are short and cutting, full of a smart and reprehensive vehemency; the word and the blow seem to go together.

In the prosecution of them, for a more methodical proceeding, it will be convenient to inquire into their occasion. For since they are a command, and every command respects some person to whom it is directed: and since this command is of repentance, which always relates to some sin to be repented of; this inquiry will give us a fair insight and introduction into both.

First of all then, for the occasion of these words: if we have recourse to the 12th verse, we shall find that they are part of a letter to the church of Pergamos, indited by the Spirit of God, and directed to the angel of that church.

And here it will not be amiss briefly to consider what the angel of that church was. It is evident that the church of Pergamos must be taken collectively, for many particular churches included in it; for that it should be but one particular church, considering the number of the persons and the extent of the place, cannot with any colour of sense or reason, be affirmed. By "angel" therefore must be understood that chief pastor, who had the supervisal and government of those particular churches, and the pastors of them, contained within the compass of Pergamos; correspondent to a bishop among us, ruling over the particular churches and ministers of his diocese.

And the denomination of "angel" shows the divine justification of the office, it being in Eccles. v. 6, given to the priest, the chief ruler of the Jewish church. Neither can any instance be given of the name of "angel," ascribed to any person employed about the church; but it imports a messenger from God. So that, I say, it is probable, that the word carries in it divine institution.

But, however, both the word and the usage of it here imports Christ's owning and approbation of the office: and confirmation is a kind of after-insinuation; at least, it is no less authentic. But some reply, that the word angel may be applied here to some one pastor or presbyter, equal to the rest. To which I answer, that it is highly improbable that the Spirit should address a message to one minister, who was but equal to the rest, and no more concerned in it than the rest, and that about a matter relating to all their churches.

But I add further, that this could not be; for one pastor over a particular church has nothing to do to interpose and correct the abuses of other particular churches, which are severally under their own pastors and governors.

But now, the minister here spoken of is blamed for the abuses of all the churches in Pergamos, and charged to rectify them; which clearly imports, that he stood invested with a more general and extended jurisdiction. And this by the way, though yet it is no digression.

Having thus shown who the person was to whom this letter was directed ; in the next place we are to consider the subject-matter of the letter itself ; which contains in it these three things : 1. Commemoration of the virtues and graces that were eminent and resplendent in this church, in ver. 13. 2. A charge for some sinful abuse that had crept in, and was connived at, in ver. 14. 3. An advice upon the whole matter, which was speedy and immediate repentance.

In our present discourse we shall only be concerned in the two latter of these : and first, for the sinful abuse or scandal here charged upon this church ; it was its toleration of that vile and impure sect of the Nicolaitans. The Nicolaitans, as their name imports, took their rise and denomination from one Nicolas, one of those seven deacons who were first ordained by the apostles, Acts vi. 5. Now their heresy consisted of these two branches, 1st. That they did assert the eating of sacrifices offered to idols, and that even in honour to those idols, to be lawful : 2dly, That they held and abetted the lawfulness of fornication. So that their heresy was a complete system of all impiety : the first part containing the greatest spiritual, the latter the greatest carnal pollution.

In the 14th verse of this chapter, the Spirit calls this heresy "the way of Balaam;" who, when he could not curse, fell to counsel ; that is, to do a greater mischief ; and advised Balak to cause the women of the Moabites to entice the children of Israel to the feasts of Priapus ; in which "the people sat down to eat and drink, and afterwards rose up to play;" that is, they first feasted upon the idol-sacrifices, and then finished the solemnity with the impurities of lust. It seems, something of this nature was revived and practised by these impure heretics ; a strange thing, one would think, that so filthy a heresy should get ground in the very beginnings and first dawns of the church, and in the purest times of Christianity !

Yet thus it was. The brightest day may begin with a mist ; and the best of churches is not privileged from corruptions : but it was not so much the churches' having, as not animadverting upon these pests, that is here reprehended. They had their meetings by public toleration and connivance : and this is *that* for which the Spirit rounds them up with this short advice, armed and seconded with a severe combination.

Come we now to the next thing ; which is, the counsel of speedy repentance, given upon this scandal, and contained in the words of the text ; in which are these two parts :

1. The first stands directed to the church itself : "Repent, or I will come unto thee quickly." By God's coming, is meant his approach in the way of judgment : for so the word *coming* frequently signifies, both in the Old and New Testament. Isaiah xxx. 27, "The name of the Lord cometh from far, burning

with his anger." And in Psalm 1. 8, "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence;" that is, he shall come to judge and punish; or, as the usual phrase is, he shall come with a vengeance: for so the following words explain these: A fire shall devour before him."

In the same sense also is the word *coming* frequently used in the New Testament; which is well worth our observation, as being of signal use to rescue sundry places of scripture, that have been hitherto held under false and perverse interpretations.

In this sense is it taken in Matt. xvi. 27, where it is said, that "the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels, to reward every man according to his works;" which place though many understand of Christ's coming in his own person to judge all men at the end of the world, yet indeed it signifies only his coming in the ministers of his wrath, to take vengeance of the Jews in the destruction of Jerusalem.

That this is so I evince by another parallel place, in Matt. xxvi. 64, where Christ, speaking of his coming, says, ἀπ' ἄρτι ὀψέσθαι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, which word ἀπ' ἄρτι, though we translate *hereafter*, yet it properly signifies *from now*; that is, within a very short time.

But yet more fully from that forementioned place in Matt. xvi., whereas in verse 27, he had said, "You shall see the Son of man come with the glory of his Father, and the holy angels," he subjoins in the very next verse, "And verily there are some standing here, that shall not taste death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

What! did he mean that they should not die till the day of judgment? No; this was evidently false and impossible: but his meaning was, that some of the younger sort of his auditors should live to see the execution of his wrath upon the Jews, in the destruction of Jerusalem.

And this seems excellently to interpret a place that will hardly be understood without it, in John xxi. 22, where Christ says to Peter, concerning John, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Here now the apostles' minds, running upon the last judgment, presently concluded that John should not die. But now take the word *coming* in this sense, and it gives a clear and apposite interpretation to the place; John being the **only** disciple who both saw and survived the destruction of Jerusalem.

But the only doubt that may occur here is this: How Christ could be said *to come* in the destruction of Jerusalem, which was effected by the Roman armies: but the solution is easy. For when God, by his peculiar providence, raises up any instruments to execute his decrees or purposes upon any people or place, the actions of those persons are both usually and properly applied to God, as if he had done them immediately himself.

And for his coming with his holy angels, it is very probable, that when God brings a public ruin and destruction upon a nation, he uses the ministry of angels, as well as the weapons of men. This seems clear to me from that place in Dan. x. 20, where the angel says to him, "Now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come." In like manner Christ might send his angels out to fight against Judea, before the coming of Vespasian's army.

And lastly, for his coming in the clouds; he that shall read Josephus and others concerning the Jewish history, will find what strange prodigious appearances there were in the sky, of armies fighting, and a flaming sword hanging over Jerusalem, a little before the Romans sacked and ruined that city. So that, all things being laid together, I cannot but conclude it more than probable that this is the sense of the place.

A learned author, considering this sense of Christ's coming, judges that the whole book of the Revelations, in which that is so often spoken of, relates to things immediately to happen after the delivery of that prophecy; and consequently, that it had its completion within two hundred years. And certain it is, that the very beginning of the book says, that it was to deliver "things shortly to come to pass;" and the last concluding chapter emphatically repeats this three times, "Behold, I come quickly."

Now, if the judgment of this learned man stands, as it hath both the countenance of reason and of the express words of the text, then what must become of the bloody tenets of those desperate wretches, who for these many years have been hammering of blood, confusion, and rebellion out of this book, from a new fancy that they have of Christ's coming. Thus ruling their lives, not by precepts, but prophecies; and not being able to find any warrant for their actions in the clear and express word of law or gospel, they endeavour to shelter their villanies in the obscurities and shades of the Revelation; a book intricate and involved, and for the most part never to be understood; and upon which, when wit and industry has done its utmost, the best comment is but conjecture. And thus much for the first part of the words that stands directed by the church, "Repent, or I will come unto thee quickly."

2. The other part of the words relates to those heretics; "And I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth:" that is, with the reprehending discovering force of the word, and the censures of the church; where, for the credit and divine authority of the ministry, Christ owns that for the sword of his own mouth, which was only delivered by theirs.

Now we must observe, that as the Spirit had called this heresy "the way of Balaam," so the judgment here pronounced is still

with allusion to that of Balaam; whom as the angel of God met with a drawn sword, to divert him from his course, so God here threatens to meet these heretics with the curse and terrors of the law, and the spiritual sword of his word.

And every obstinate sinner must know, that it is God that meets him face to face, that withstands and pleads with him in the word as with a drawn sword; and therefore, if he is resolved to persist and hold on his course, he must of necessity run upon the sword's point, the very pike of divine vengeance, and resolve to fight it out with God and all his judgments: or, by a penitential prudence, fairly consult his safety in his duty, and retreat.

Now, from this expression here used, "I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth," I collect these two occasional observations.

1st. That the word of God, powerfully dispensed, has the force and efficacy of a spiritual sword. For as a sword has both a glittering radiance and brightness to strike and terrify the eye, and also an edge to pierce the flesh; so the word, being drawn forth and brandished by a skilful hand, darts a convincing light into the understanding, and with an irresistible edge enters the heart and the affections.

It is not like the song of one that has a pleasant voice, that only strikes the ear, gratifies the fancy, and courts those affections which it should command. But when the word comes from God, it comes with such a searching, invincible quickness, such a spiritual keenness, that it shall cut and make its way through the hardest heart, and not find admittance by mere petition, or precarious suasion; for a sword never enters by entreaty.

And for men's encouragement to attend upon this ordinance, take the proudest and the stoutest sinner upon earth, and God is able, with his word alone, to fetch him upon his knees, and to lay him in the dust. Take the stubbornest and the knottiest corruption of the most depraved heart, and God is able, with the sword of his mouth, to hew it asunder. And when Providence shall place a man under the dint of such a ministry, he will find the work short and speedy; it will quickly send him away converted or inexcusable.

2dly. From hence I observe, when God undertakes the purging of a church, or the reformation of religion, he does it with the weapons of religion, with "the sword of his mouth." Show me any one text in the whole book of God, especially since the spirit of meekness took place in the introduction of Christianity, where God commissions any man, at least any subject, to correct the abuses of religion with fire and sword, and to dispute the articles of his faith in the high places of the field. For in such cases, if his conscience will not suffer him to obey, the same con-

science will as strongly oblige him to suffer. And therefore, though the truths, the worship, nay the person itself of Christ should be invaded, yet let Peter put up his sword, and let Christ employ his own, even this "sword of his mouth," which is sharper and better, and able much more powerfully to reach and affect the ear without cutting it off.

And I am persuaded that the great reformation that God intends to bring over the Christian world, in the last and best days of the church, shall not be effected with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood, with fire and faggot, but Christ shall do it silently, yet powerfully, by "the brightness of his coming." As the rising sun chases away the darkness, without noise indeed, but yet without resistance.

So that whatsoever trash or stubble shall be built upon the foundation of the eternal word of God, swords and spears, weapons heterogeneous to these things, shall not be employed for their removal, but they shall insensibly vanish and moulder away before the prevailing efficacy of the everlasting gospel. As a skilful disputant does not cut off the fallacious argument of his opponent by fretting and fuming, and speaking loud, but by a calm, sedate reducing it to the rules of argumentation; just so it is here, where Christ shall subdue his enemies, not by combat, but discovery. And then the promises being fulfilled, in the universal propagation of the gospel, Jesus Christ shall reign as "King of kings, and Lord of lords," and that without deposing of other princes. And if God be true, and Christianity no imposture, whatever this is brought about, it will be in this manner; for the whole dispensation of the gospel, whether offensive or defensive, must needs be entirely spiritual.

And thus having finished the general explication of the words, I shall now descend to a more particular prosecution of the principal design of them, which is to enforce the duty of immediate repentance; and this I shall do in these two things.

I. I shall show what that repentance is that is here enjoined.

II. I shall produce arguments to enforce the necessity of its immediate exercise.

I. For the first of these: since divinity has been so much spun into disputation, repentance is a thing almost as difficult in the notion as it is in the practice. There are three words in scripture to express it by, *μεταμέλεια*, *μετάνοια*, and *ἐπιστροφή*; though this last rather signifies *conversion*. The first, which is *μεταμέλεια*, denotes an anxiety or displeasure of mind upon something done amiss, to which answers the Latin *pœnitentia*; the second, which is *μετάνοια*, signifies a total change or transmutation of the mind, to which answers *resipiscentia*.

Now between these two some make this difference; that the former signifies either the whole of an ineffectual repentance, or

only the beginning of such a one as, in the issue, proves saving and effectual; and that the latter signifies the whole work of such a one as is sound, and effectual to salvation.

It must be here confessed, that according to the strict and rigid acceptation of the word, *μεταμέλεια* is only that trouble, regret, or anxiety of mind for the evil of past actions, which is rather a preparative to repentance than the work itself, and consequently being rested in cannot save; and on the other side, *μετάνοια* signifies strictly a change of mind, which, in the matter of sin, proves to be saving.

This, I say, is the proper and strict signification of the words; but since we can determine nothing of them in a scripture way from their literal meaning, but only from their use and acceptation there, which in several instances may be easily shown to be promiscuous, we cannot make their native literal force any solid ground for such a distinction. Wherefore leaving all weak and unwarrantable deductions from the first signification of the Latin or Greek words, you may observe that repentance in scripture has a threefold acceptation.

1. It is taken for the first act by which the soul turns from sin to God; the first dividing stroke that separates between sin and the heart; the first step and advance that a sinner makes to holiness; the first endeavours and throes of a new birth.

2. It is taken for the whole course of a pious life, comprising the whole actions a man performs from first to last inclusively; from his first turning from a wicked life to the last period of a godly. This is the only repentance that Socinus will admit; and some others, who would pretend to bring something new, but only transcribe from him in this particular.

Now such as own this assertion find themselves under a necessity to assert also, that faith and repentance are the same things, and differ only in the manner of our conception. So that the whole obedience of our lives, as it is a turning from sin to God, properly bears the name of repentance; but then as this obedience and turning to God proceeds from a belief of the promises and precepts of Christ, so they say it is properly styled faith. Whence repentance and faith, according to them, are only two different denominations fixed upon the same thing, as it sustains different respects.

But that this is not the proper notion of repentance is clear from these reasons:

(1.) Because, if repentance be properly the whole entire course of gospel-obedience, from the first to the last of a man's life, then no man could properly be said to have repented, till such time as he had actually finished such a course of obedience; that is, not till his death; which to assert, is a strange paradox, and contrary to the general apprehensions of men upon this subject.

(2.) The scripture, no less than the natural reason of the thing itself, places repentance before faith, Matt. xxi. 32, "And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not, that ye might afterwards believe in him." Here we see repentance is made the antecedent condition of faith: but now, should repentance grasp in the whole series and course of gospel-obedience, to the last period of our lives, how were it possible for faith to follow repentance, unless we should begin to believe in another world?

(3.) The scripture makes all those subsequent acts of new obedience after our first turning to God, not to be the integral constituent parts, but the effects, fruits, and consequents of repentance. Matt. iii. 8, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." But to make the fruit part of the tree itself is certainly a thing very preposterous.

I conclude, therefore, that repentance is not formally the whole course of new obedience, but that first act by which a man turns from sin to God. But then this I also add, that though it is not formally, yet it is virtually and consequentially so. That is in plain terms: repentance is not itself this course of new obedience, but it does infer and produce it, and that as its inseparable effect or consequent: so that if this new obedience does not follow in the course of a man's whole conversation, after his first turning to God, he must conclude that that act was spurious and unsound; and that indeed it never truly and thoroughly brought him off from sin, whatsoever solemnity of sorrow, tears, and confession it might be attended with.

Let him fast, and whip himself, and run barefoot, and mumble out a thousand *misere mei's*, like some ignorant formalists, who, the truth is, know not what repentance means, as being utterly strangers to the spirit of the gospel. Or let him pray and weep, and hang down his head like a bulrush, go softly, and look sourly; yet if a change pass not upon his life and actions, so that instead of his accustomed wickedness, the whole tract of his conversation is drawn forth in a constant, equable practice of the contrary virtues, that man must know that he has not repented. He has perhaps deluded himself, and deceived others, stopped the cries of conscience and the clamours of men; but repented he has not; and fearful were his case, should God snatch him out of the world in that condition.

3. Repentance is taken for a man's turning to God after the guilt of some particular sin. It differs from the former thus; that the former is from a state of sin; this latter only from a sinful act. No repentance precedes the former, but this supposes a true repentance to have gone before. Thus Peter is said, after his denial of Christ, to have been converted, Luke xxii., that is, to have repented; not but that Peter was a true penitent and convert before: but upon so sad and notorious a fall, he was, by a renewed exercise of repentance, to disentangle himself from the guilt of that particular sin of denying his master.



This repentance, therefore, builds upon the former; and it is that which is here intended in the words. For the church of Pergamos was in favour with God, and consequently must needs have repented before, as is clearly collected from that elogy the Spirit gives it in Rev. ii. 13, "Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith." But by reason of this scandal permitted and connived at, it was to cleanse itself from this stain by a renewed fresh act of humiliation.

The distinction, therefore, between these two kinds of repentance is carefully to be observed. The first passes but once upon the soul, the latter is to be frequent, indeed continual. Naaman washed off the leprosy of his body but once, but the soil of his hands every day.

And thus much concerning the nature of the repentance here spoken of; which being enjoined under pain of a speedy judgment, in case of omission it follows, that the command was not indefinitely of any kind of repentance, but only of such a one as was present and immediate.

II. Come we therefore to the second thing proposed, which is to *produce arguments to engage us in the speedy and immediate exercise of this duty.*

1. The first argument against a deferred repentance shall be taken from this consideration, that no man can be secure of the future. Neither, indeed, will men act as if they were in things that concern this life, for no man willingly defers his pleasures.

And did men here well compute the many frailties of nature, and further add the contingencies of chance, how quickly a disease from within, or a blow from without may tear down the strongest constitution, certainly they would ensure eternity upon something else than a life as uncertain as the air that feeds it. Do you not think, that that young man that brought David that feigned traitorous message, did not set forth in good hearty plight in the morning? and yet before sunset the vengeance of God overtook and slew him in his sin.

God tells the sinner he must repent to-day; he now thinks with himself, that he can contrive the matter more wisely, and defer his repentance to some of those years into which his present health seems to give him a long prospect. And now, is it not just with God to smite such a one in the insatiation of such counsels, and to convince him, that God spoke good reason when he told him, that immediate repentance was necessary?

And indeed the providence of God, for the most part, orders the matter so, that such are snatched and hurried away to judgment on a sudden, when they have power to repent of nothing but this, that they had not repented before. See how God deals with that servant that deferred his repentance upon a supposed delay of his master's coming, Matt. xxiv. 50, 51, "The lord of

that servant shall come in an hour that he looked not for him, and cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with hypocrites." God's grace will not always dance attendance upon obstinate resolved hypocrites ; for this were, as if the sun of mercy should stand still over their heads at their beck and command, while they are fighting against heaven.

Should God open the book of his decrees, and give a man a prospect into the secrets of futurity, and show him his death sealed and appointed at such a day and such an hour, he might then, indeed, with some more reason, enjoy the present, and set apart some few days to make his peace with God, and set his soul in order before he died. But this is a privilege that God vouchsafes to none, and that upon the highest reason ; for if he should, it would destroy religion.

Wherefore, since this is a secret, like God's dearest attributes incommunicable, locked up from the curious prying inspection of all created knowledge, with what reason can any man build his life, his happiness, his eternity upon such a repentance, as hovers upon the uncertain slippery conjectures of a supposed futurity ?

Ordinary experience observed would unbewitch men as to these delusions. Did you ever see any man arrested, but it was before he was aware ? A man would not willingly have his friend take him in a surprise, much less then his greatest enemy, death and judgment. Possibly God may strike him in the very eagerness and perpetration of his sin. Thus he sent Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, in the heat of their schism and rebellion, quick into hell. Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead with a lie in their mouths. Zimri and Cozbi, in the very act of uncleanness, were despatched into another world.

And let that man, who promises to himself a future repentance, and upon that confidence proceeds to sin, show me any solid satisfactory reason, why God may not, in the same manner, cashier him in the very commission of that sin that he is designing. And then, whether it would not be the grimmest dispensation that ever befell him, to be thrust out of the world with his sins about his ears ; and so to be brought, as it were, in the very heat and steam of his offence, to render up an account for it at God's tribunal, before he had scarce finished the commission.

The events of to-morrow are neither within the compass of our understanding to know, or of our power to dispose of : wherefore the advice of the Spirit concerning the time of our repentance, is the same with that of St. Austin, who counselled his friend to repent a day before he died ; which, proceeding upon terms of rational certainty, is to repent to-day.

3. The second argument shall be taken from this consideration, that, supposing the allowance of time, yet we cannot be sure of power to repent. It is very possible, that by the insensible

encroaches of sin a man's heart may be so hardened, as to have neither power nor will to repent, though he has time and opportunity. He that is unwilling to-day, will undoubtedly be more unwilling to-morrow. And the reason is evident, because his present unwillingness proceeds from the hold that sin has got upon his will already: but this every hour increases, and gets further ground upon it; so that sin being increased, unwillingness to repent, the proper effect and consequent of sin, must needs be increased in an equal proportion.

The longer the heart and sin converse together, the more familiar they will grow; and then, the stronger the familiarity, the harder the separation. Does any one think he has his heart so in his hand as to say, Thus far will I sin, and there will I leave off? Such a one shows, indeed, that he neither understands the nature of sin nor of his heart.

How that that which now creeps and begs for entrance, having once got admission, will command and domineer: and like that emperor, though it gets into power like a fox, yet it will manage it, and reign like a lion. Neither does he know those many windings and turnings, the sly excuses and glossing apologies, that the heart will suggest to rescue its sin from the summons of repentance, being once endeared and bound fast to it by inveterate continuance.

The commission of sin is like the effusion of water, easily contained in its bounds, but uncontrollable in its course. We indeed may give it vent, but God alone knows where it will stop. Is not that man therefore stupidly ignorant, who chooses to encounter his sin by a future repentance? Reason would argue and discourse thus: If I find that I have scarce power enough to resist my sin at present, shall I not have much less when time shall give it growth and strength, and as it were knit its joints, and render it unconquerable?

It is here as with a man in a combat; every blow his adversary gives him, disables him for the very next resistance. A man at first finds the beginnings and little inconveniences of a disease, but physic is unpleasant; and withal, he finds himself in a good competence of strength at present, and therefore he resolves to wear it out; but in the mean time his distemper eats on its way, and grows upon him, till at length he has not so much as strength to bear physic, but his disease quickly runs him down, and becomes incurable.

A man at first is strong, and his sin is weak, and he may easily break the neck of it by a mature repentance; but his own deluding heart tells him, that he had better repent hereafter; that is, when, on the contrary, he himself is deplorably weak, and his sin invincibly strong.

Commission of sin may indeed wound, but it is continuance of sin that kills. A man by falling to the ground may perhaps

get a bruise or a knock; but by lying upon the ground after he is fallen, he may chance to catch his death.

And now does not that man's heart give him wise and wholesome counsel, that bids him balk the present, and fix upon the future? But still, as the desires of sin are impious, so its discourses are irrational. And what a dreadful thing is it for a man, in the grand concernment of his repentance, in the great deciding cast for eternity, to relinquish the word, and to consult his heart? whereas the word cannot, and his heart cannot but deceive him.

The prophet Elisha, 2 Kings. viii. 12, told Hazael, knowing his design to murder his prince, that his villany would not stop there, but that he would proceed so far as to wreak his fury upon sucking infants, and to rip up women with child. But his heart in the mean while, which possibly at that very time, together with the sin, had designed its repentance, that persuaded him another thing, and makes him reply with resent and wonder, "What! am I a dog that I should do these things?" And questionless, at that time he little believed that he could be so wicked; but we know that the event shows whether Elisha or his heart were the truer prophet. For as soon as he had committed his first great leading sin, and his hand was well in, and hot in the work, his corruption rages and swells higher and higher, and his heart serves him for the utmost execution of all those villanies, that at a distance he himself abhorred and judged incredible.

And how does that man know, that has built all upon his resolves of repentance hereafter, but that he, who now trembles at the first approach of a temptation, and can discern the insensible progress of his corruption, so that upon the very first rising and moving of the heart to sin, his conscience smites him, remorse pursues, troubles, and disquiets him; the same, within a while after his conscience has worn off all those restrictions, and becomes hardened and steeled with custom in sinning, may lash on furiously and audaciously, with a high hand and bare face against the grudges of conscience, the terrors of God, and the shame of the world; till at length he ends a wretched course in irrecoverable perdition; unless God in mercy steps in, and by a potent overruling hand of conviction rebukes the rage of his corruption, and says, Thus far it shall come, and no further.

But now, as in the very course of a natural cause, continuance in sin hardens against repentance; as a man that is out of his way, if he be far gone, will be hardly brought to return, but will venture over hedge and ditch, and wade through any difficulty rather than endure the irksome ingrateful trouble of a retreat; so we must further know,

That repentance is entirely in God's disposal. This grace is in the soul from God, as light is in the air from the sun, by con-

tinual emanation; so that God may shut or open his hand, contract or diffuse, set forth or suspend the influence of it as he pleases. And if God gives not repenting grace, there will be a hard heart and a dry eye, maugre all the poor frustraneous endeavours of nature. A piece of brass may as easily melt, or a flint bewater itself, as the heart of man, by any innate power of its own, resolve itself into a penitential humiliation. If God does not, by an immediate blow of his omnipotence, strike the rock, these waters will never gush out. The Spirit blows where it listeth, and if that blows not, these showers can never fall.

And now, if the matter stands so, how does the impenitent sinner know but that God, being provoked by his present impenitence, may irreversibly propose within himself, to seal up these fountains, and shut him up under hardness of heart and reprobation of sense? and then farewell all thoughts of repentance for ever. See this sadly exemplified in Pharaoh. He had time enough to repent, day after day; but yet he never did repent; for it is expressly said, that "God hardened his heart;" that is, he withheld his grace. See the children of Israel in the same case, in Psalm lxxix. 11, "My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me;" that is, they peremptorily refused God's present call to repentance. What follows? why in the next verse, "So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts; and they walked in their own hearts;" that is, they would not repent, and therefore God, in effect, tells them that they should not repent: but leaves them to the delusions of a besotted mind, and the desperate, incorrigible estate of a final impenitence.

3. In the third and last place, the duty of immediate repentance may be enforced upon this reason; that admitting a man has both time and grace to repent, yet by such delay the work will be incredibly more difficult. The longer a debt lies unpaid, the greater it grows; and not discharged, is quickly multiplied. The sin to be repented of will be the greater, and power and strength to repent by will be less. And though a man escapes death the utmost effect of his distemper, yet certainly he will find it something to be cut and scarified, and lanced, and to endure all the tortures of a deferred cure.

And is it not better for a man in the business of repentance to rise up early, and take the morning of his years before him, while these heavenly penitential dews fall kindly and naturally, than when his day is far spent, and the heat of temptation has scorched them off from his heart, and they are gone; and he must be forced to struggle for every tear, to pump for every drop, to recover and refresh his languishing and otherwise dying soul? I say, is it not much better, while his conscience is tender and apt, to relent under every motion and impression of the word, while his wound is green, and his heart bleeds yet afresh, to stop the bloody issue of sin with the healing balsam of a bleeding Saviour, applied quick and warm by a speedy humiliation.

By a single commission of sin, a blot falls upon the soul; but, by continuance, it soaks into it. And, when once sin comes to have that desperate symptom of being inveterate, an ordinary repentance will not serve turn. The stain must lie and steep a great while longer; the brine must be sharper, and the repentance severer, before the soul can be recovered to its first whiteness and integrity.

God, who at first might have been won by entreaties, must now be wrestled with: and a man suffer many foils and repulses in his spiritual conflict, endure many bitter agonies, pass under much darkness and doubt, as to the whole matter of his eternal condition, before he can recover upon his heart a sense of God's lost favour. And perhaps, when at length it does return, it is but weak and imperfect, mingled with much fear and spiritual dissatisfaction. As when the clouds have spread themselves thick and dark over the face of the whole heavens, the showers must fall, and it may continue raining for many days before you can so much as see the sun; and when at length he shines forth, yet it is but waterishly, and through the cloud, with a dim, uncomfortable brightness: just so is it with a sinner in his deferred repentance.

O remember David, his roarings and cryings, his broken bones, his mournful days, and his sleepless nights. Why, what was the cause of all this? In Psalm xxxviii., "My wounds stink and are corrupt, because of my foolishness." They festered and grew noisome, only by his foolish deferring of the cure. For all agree that it was near a year, that David lay in his two great sins, before he repented.

But on the contrary, in Peter, who followed his sin close at the heels, who rose betimes to his work; as soon as ever the cock crew, and the alarm was given, we find that the matter of controversy was quickly taken up between Christ and him: and being thus converted, he had the honour to strengthen his brethren, and to be the great leading man and captain of the apostles.

Consider therefore, that the speedy penitent has a much fairer reception and easier discharge from God, than he that lingers; whose repentance, though it may prove sincere, yet it still comes with this degrading circumstance, that a delayed courtesy does *diu noluit*.

We know, he that brings ready money has a thing much cheaper than another, together with an overplus of more credit and esteem into the bargain. In like manner the late penitent, like the late paymaster, though by such a repentance he may secure himself from the final arrests of damnation; yet still it is something sordid and degenerate.

Consider also, that God is so much pleased with an early penitence, that he is ready to accept that which is in itself a duty, as a gift: at least, to reward it for such. Besides, he that is slow to

attempt this great work, though his repentance may be real and sincere, yet he will scarce be able to know that it is so ; and then, though his condition may be sure, yet his comfort cannot be entire ; but though he is at peace with God, yet he will hardly be at peace with himself ; in the mean time the early penitent has repentance, with these two incredible advantages, he repents with facility and with certainty. I have now done : you have heard the duty, and the arguments to enforce it ; how that the neglect of it is a bold venture upon God's justice ; and that no man can be sure of time and opportunity to repent ; nor, admitting this, can he promise himself grace and ability to execute this work : and lastly, supposing that he has both, yet the work will be trebly more difficult and laborious, and, at the best, uncomfortable and dubious. Add to this, that God may thunder out his judgments, which will overtake and force us to mend our pace : and, because we would not repent upon a fairer invitation, force us to lie down and repent in shame, poverty and sickness ; and to heighten spiritual desertions with temporal afflictions.

Since this is so, I shall wrap up all in that advice of the prophet Amos to Israel, in the fourth chapter, verse 12, "Thus will I do unto thee, O Israel ; and because I will do this unto thee, therefore prepare to meet thy God, O Israel !" As for any other application, since deductions from the words are natural and easy, I shall leave it to your own thoughts : and indeed these truths are of that nature, that he that really believes them cannot but apply them.

## SERMON VI.

### PART II.

#### THE NECESSITY OF IMMEDIATE REPENTANCE.

#### REVELATION II. 16.

*Repent ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*

As before I enforced the duty of immediate repentance, and disputed against the deferring of it, by arguments drawn from the unreasonableness of such a course ; so now, I shall further proceed against it, from a consideration of the strong, peculiarly provoking nature of this sin above all others ; though indeed, in propriety of speech, impenitence cannot be called a sin, but rather a collection and combination of sins, or a sinful state and condition.

But certain it is, that there is nothing that kindles the divine wrath to such a flame, as the delayed exercise of the great duty of repentance. We find not such fierce expressions of vengeance against any sinner, as the Spirit of God, in Deut. xxix. 20, 21, discharges against him that obstinately delayed his repentance. It is said, "that God will not spare him : that the anger of the Lord, nay, his jealousy, which is the very sting and poison of his anger, shall smoke against that man ; that all the curses of the law, shall lie upon him ; that God shall blot out his name from under heaven : and lastly, that he shall even separate him to evil, according to all the curses of the covenant."

Now what could have been said so fully, with such a copiousness of terror ? every word almost carrying in it fire and brimstone ; every period being, as it were, pregnant with death, and breathing out destruction : and yet we may be sure that every tittle shall be verified. God rather overdoes his words, than underspeaks his actions : and his performances are always commensurate to his expressions.

But both, we see, light heavy upon the lingering penitent ; whose sin, I conceive, is so eminently and signally provoking to God upon these reasons ;

1st. Because it is the abuse of a remedy. Since sin entered into the world, there is nothing but repentance can stand between the sinner and certain destruction. It is the only asylum and place of refuge that God has provided for malefactors. If mercy



had not found this expedient, every man had been the deplorable object of a remorseless, vindictive justice. Now for a sinner to neglect this, to slight and trample upon the conditions of pardon, what is it else, but as if a man, that lay gasping under a mortal wound, should both throw away the balsam, and defy the physician?

Certainly it cannot but be the highest provocation, to see guilt kick at mercy; and presumption take advantage merely from a redundancy of compassion. He that will fight it out, and not surrender, only because he has articles of peace offered to him, deserves to feel the sword of an unmerciful enemy. A delayed repentance is a downright defiance to mercy. And every moment a man spends under such a delay, he falls under that character of Babylon, Jer. li. 9, that God "would have healed him, but yet he was not healed:" and that for no other cause, than that he pursues, chooses, and even woos death, and solicits his own destruction.

2dly. The reason why God is exasperated by our delaying this duty is, because it clearly shows that a man does not love it, as a duty, but only intends to use it for an expedient of escape. It is not because it is pleasing to God, grateful to an offended majesty, or because he apprehends a worth and excellency in the thing itself; for then he would set about it immediately: for love is quick and active; and desire hates all delay.

But a man is enamoured with his sin, and resolves to take his full course in the satisfaction of his lusts, to consult his pleasure, and to sacrifice the vigour of his years to the gratification of his appetite, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life, and all those other sinful vanities that are apt to bewitch the heart of man.

This, I say, he resolves; but in regard the rear of such a course is brought up with a sad and fatal account at the last, all ending in eternal wrath and damnation; that he may now escape this, and will come off clear, he will repent just at the last; and so, by that means, as this life has given him the pleasures of sin, repentance shall interpose and rescue him from the fruits and effects of sin.

And is not this a neat design, to live with pleasure, and yet die with peace? to provoke God's justice all the time of one's life, and then fairly to slip from it, by repenting some minutes before death?

But it is not to be wondered at, if God's fury rises at such a course; for it evidently turns his grace into wantonness, and makes it drudge and subserve to the design of sin. For he that resolves only to secure himself by repenting at the last, at the same time also resolves to continue sinning all the mean while. Which is nothing else but an endeavour to put a trick upon God; to affront him to his face; and yet to despise him under the protections of his own mercy.

Though the allowance of repentance be an infinitely gracious concession, yet we are mistaken if we think that the entire design of it is only the sinner's interest, and not God's glory, as well as his salvation. God intends repentance to be a means to purify the heart from that corruption that renders it utterly unserviceable. Repentance, though it cannot deserve, yet it must qualify the soul for heaven. And this penitential cleansing, though it merits nothing, yet it is a necessary condition to fit a man to be a vessel of honour. In short, repentance is chiefly valued by God, because he loves the fruits of repentance.

But now, he that declines the present exercise of it, and throws it back to the future, he evidently shows, that whensoever he takes it up, he does it solely for the interest of his own safety, and not to pay any retribution of honour to God; and that he repents, not to cleanse, but to secure, not to sanctify, but to defend himself.

3dly. A third reason that God's displeasure so implacably burns against this sin is, because it is evidently a counterplotting of God, and being wise above the prescribed methods of salvation, to which God makes the immediate dereliction of sin necessary. But he that defers his repentance makes this his principle, to live a sinner and to die a penitent.

But to what purpose does God command repentance, if it must be in the power of man to choose the time of it, and so to elude the duty itself, by the circumstance of its performance? It is to no end for good to give a law, if a man may interpret the sense, and so shuffle off the obligation. He that is commanded to repent, and defers it to the future, declares that he will be obliged by that command only when he thinks fit, and not before. He also looks upon it as a refined, subtle piece of policy, to choose such a repentance as has a longer consistency with sinful pleasure, and yet no less efficacy as to the procurement of salvation, than such a one as is present and immediate.

And now, may we not imagine that such a course is highly offensive? in which a poor weak man shall endeavour to vie wisdom with his Maker, to outwit and outreach an omniscience?

When he shall find a new and a shorter way to heaven, cutting off those austerities of life as superfluous, which God has vouched necessary, and so derogating from God's knowledge; withal, making those allowances and indulgencies which God has denied as destructive, and so upbraiding his goodness.

Briefly, a deferred repentance is a contradiction to God's word, and an impudent affront to all his attributes. He that hears God's counsel but follows his own, that repents at his leisure, and so makes his practice overrule his belief; he has changed his deity, and though he confesses a God, yet he adores himself.

And thus I have shown the grounds upon which the delay of

this duty is so highly provoking to God ; which ought to serve for another invincible argument against it, to all those that value his love, and tremble at his wrath.

But now to descend from the general nature of this subject to a consideration of it in particular. The grand instance of it is a death-bed repentance ; concerning the efficacy of which, since there are so many disputes, and since the right stating of it is a matter of so high consequence, we will enter into a more exact and particular discussion of it ; which I shall endeavour to manage under these two heads :

I. I shall resolve this great case of conscience, whether a death-bed repentance ever is or can be effectual to salvation.

II. I shall show, that supposing it may prove effectual, yet for any one to design it, and to build upon it beforehand, is highly dangerous, and therefore absolutely irrational.

And when I shall have despatched these two things, I suppose there can be nothing considerable in this subject that will be left unspoken to.

I. And for the first of these, *whether or no a death-bed repentance may be effectual.*

There are some who absolutely deny it, and explode it as the very bane of piety, and utterly destructive of a holy life ; and therefore by no means can be brought to open the doors of heaven to such penitents. The reasons why such a repentance cannot be effectual are these :

1. Because a good life is all along the gospel required by Christ, as indispensably necessary to salvation ; but a death-bed repentance cannot be productive of this, and therefore it cannot save. The first is evident from sundry places of scripture, as in Matt. vii. 21, "Not every one that says, Lord, Lord, but he that does the will of my Father shall be blessed ;" and John xiv. 21, "If ye love me, keep my commandments ;" and Phil. ii. 12, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling ;" with several other places ; which proclaim aloud, that there can be no admission into glory without the obedience of a holy life.

And the assumption that a death-bed repentance can produce no such thing, seems no less evident. For is it possible for a man to lead a new life when he is even ceasing to live ? Can he work out his salvation when the fatal night of death is seizing upon him, and he cannot work ?

Now since this is the condition upon which salvation depends, and since this condition cannot be performed upon a man's death-bed, it follows that all repentance that is acted there must be utterly ineffectual, as to all purposes of salvation. And thus much for the first argument.

2. The second is this, which though it may be brought under the former, yet, for the more perspicuity, I shall propose it distinctly and by itself. You may take it thus :

The only thing within the power of ~~a~~<sup>a</sup> dying penitent, is a sincere purpose of a good life, and a resolution to amend; but this is not sufficient to save, and consequently, being the utmost that he can do, it follows that he can do nothing effectual to salvation. For the clearing of this we must observe, that ~~whatsoever~~ is ~~only~~ purposed is for that very reason as yet not done, but to be done hereafter, and then the argument proceeds in this manner: Either the leading of a new life, here purposed by the death-bed penitent, is necessary actually to be done, or it is not necessary. If it be not necessary to be done, then neither is there any reason why it should be necessary to be purposed: inasmuch as action is both the cause, the end, and also the measure of purpose: but if it be necessary to be done, then it follows that barely to purpose it cannot be sufficient.

And thus, from these arguments, they infer and conclude the absolute nullity of a death-bed repentance.

But, for my part, I cannot be yet convinced that there is an absolute necessity to reprobate all death-bed penitents, and to exclude them from all possibility of being saved. It is an assertion harsh and inhuman, and at the very first sight seems to carry in it a contrariety to the merciful and tender spirit of the gospel; and therefore ought not to be admitted, but upon most clear and unavoidable reasons, and such as yet I see none to enforce it.

For the first general exception; that it naturally undermines the necessity of a good life, and takes away all strictness and holiness of conversation, and so turns the gospel into a doctrine of licentiousness; making it to warrant and patronize a continuance in sin, from the assurance it gives to men, that upon such a repentance they shall be saved at the very last.

To this I answer, first, by concession; that if we state all a man's actions in things spiritual, upon a perfect entire freedom of will, by which it is in his power to repent when he will, after he has persisted in his sin as long as he pleased; so that he is so perfect a master of his choice, as to be able to determine it to sin, or to the practice of holiness, at any time whatsoever: I say, upon this principle I confess, that it does in a great measure untie and unravel all obligations to a holy life. And supposing that a man were sure of the time of his life, and that it should not, by any unexpected accident, be snapped off suddenly, the doctrine of the efficacy of a death-bed, or indeed of any future repentance, would in its nature tend to encourage such a man to a presumptuous perseverance in sin. But then, considering that (as I have evinced already) no man has his life leased to him for any set time, nor secured from casual fatal accidents, but that he may lose it unawares: even this principle itself, of a free entire power in man to repent when he will, cannot, upon a rational account,

warrant any man either in the delay of a pious, or in the pursuit of a virtuous life.

But then I add; that repentance is not to be stated upon the power of man's will, but upon the special grace and power of God, by which it is wrought upon the heart, whereby the will is advanced to exert those acts of repentance which of itself it is utterly unable to do. Now, upon this principle I affirm, that to hold that a death-bed repentance may be effectual, neither cuts off the necessity of a good life, nor indeed encourages any one to defer his repentance till that time.

For, as I shall venture to tell any man, that if in the very last period, the last expiring instant of his life, he shall sincerely repent him of all his past sins, he shall assuredly find mercy; so I shall tell him also, that it is entirely in the pleasure and hand of God, whether he shall be able to repent or no; and that he has no certainty in the world that God will vouchsafe him such a measure of grace at that hour; but much, on the contrary, to make him suspect and doubt that he may deny it him, and revenge the provocations of a wicked life with impenitence and obduration at the time of death.

And thus I think that the exception against the efficacy of a death-bed repentance is clearly removed, by stating the exercise of it upon this principle. For though I say, that a man shall be saved whensoever he repents, yet I deny also, that a man can repent whensoever he pleases.

Having thus made our way through this general objection, we are now to look back upon those two arguments that were brought against this doctrine.

The first was; That no repentance can be saving but such a one as produces a holy life, and is attended with it; but how can a man upon his death-bed, begin a holy life, when he is even ceasing to live?

To this I answer, that the space between the first act of repentance, by which the soul is turned from sin to God, and between a man's death, be it never so short, even to but one minute, it is reckoned in the accounts of the gospel for a holy life; that is, any time that a sanctified person lives, is a holy life.

Now that this is so I thus evince; for either this is sufficient, or there is required some determinate space of time, under the compass of which no man can be said to have lived holily: if this be asserted, let that fixed determinate compass of time be assigned.

Either it must be the major part of a man's life, or a just half of it, or some set number of years or days.

If the first; then he that repents and is converted in the fifteenth year of his age, and dies in the thirtieth, cannot be said to have lived a holy life, and therefore cannot be saved, inasmuch

as the major part of his life does not come under the accounts of repentance. In like manner, he that is converted in the twentieth year of his age, and dies before he reaches his fortieth, must come under the same doom, as not being able to bring the just half of his life under this reckoning.

But this is evidently false and absurd ; we must therefore seek for this stinted time in some set number of years or days ; and here let any one show me whether it be twelve, ten, six, or four, or one year : or, to descend to days, whether it be a hundred, sixty, thirty, ten, or seven days, that a man must have completely spent in the practice of holy duties, before he can be said to have lived a holy life ; but I believe it would puzzle any one to make such an assignation, or to find warrant for it, either in scripture or reason.

Wherefore we must reckon that time indeterminately which a man spends in this world after he has sincerely repented, be it long or be it short, for a holy life ; and consequently I see not why, in those few days, hours, nay minutes that a sincere death-bed penitent lives, he may not be as truly said to live holily, as he that dates his holy living from twenty years' continuance ; and why the widow's two mites were not as true, though not as great an offering, as his that consisted perhaps of a hundred or two hundred shekels.

To the second argument : That the death-bed penitent can only resolve upon leading a holy life ; and that if the actual leading of such a life be necessary, then barely to resolve it cannot be sufficient ; as, on the contrary, if to effect it be not necessary, then neither can it be necessary to resolve it.

To this I answer, by an absolute denial of that assertion, that the death-bed penitent can only resolve upon living a holy life. And make out the reason of this denial, I shall here first lay down what is properly a holy life. In short, it is the doing of all those actions that a man is obliged to do in the condition in which he is ; to which I add, that a man is obliged to do no more than he is capable of doing in such a condition.

Now a person upon his death-bed is only capable of doing such duties as are wholly transacted in the mind and in the will ; as loving of God, hating of sin, sorrowing for it, forgiving enemies, and the like ; and these he is not only able to resolve, but also to perform.

But to go to church, to fast and pray, kneeling, with other such actions of duty, these are naturally not within his power in that state of weakness, and therefore he is not obliged to them. Yet however, though he cannot perform these, he must not therefore be said not to live holily ; forasmuch as he does perform other holy duties, which his condition is capable of doing, and in the doing of which a holy life equally consists.

I answer therefore to the second part of the argument, that a

holy life is both necessary to be resolved on, and also to be performed, but both still in the same manner.

That is, a penitent, upon his repentance, is to resolve to live holily for that whole course of time that he is to spend in the world, and this resolution he is faithfully to perform. But he is not to resolve upon living a holy life for such or such a determinate number of years, inasmuch as it is not in his power to dispose of the time of his life so long.

But both resolution and performance as to this particular, is to respect a man's whole life for the future; whether that life fall out to be long or short. And if it chance, by God's providence, to last but one hour, yet still it is his whole life from that time, as much as if it were spun out to many years. From which it follows, that a death-bed penitent may both resolve and perform as much as is required to complete the nature of an effectual repentance.

Having thus answered the arguments brought to disprove the efficacy of a death-bed repentance, it will not be amiss to consider what kind of persons they are that are the authors of such a grim assertion.

Are they of such an unstained unblameable life? such an angelical piety and perfection? Certainly it were but reason to expect that those that throw such great stones, that give such remorseless stabs to poor dying sinners, should be able to enter heaven themselves, though it were through the eye of a needle; and should be of such a sublime sanctity as to supererogate at the least, and not to need mercy themselves, who so severely deny it to others.

But I am afraid that upon inquiry it will appear that they are nothing less. I should not willingly libel or defame any, especially from the pulpit; but from the best information I can give myself, either by reading, observation, or report, those that make the way to heaven so narrow, walk in the broad themselves; take a scope and liberty in their lives, and content themselves to be only strict in their doctrine, denying to others a possibility to repent effectually on their death-bed, while they live in that manner themselves that it seems to be for their interest to hold even a possibility of repenting after death. In short they are usually such as prescribe rules and direction for other men to follow; such as, after the practices of uncleanness, tell others that they must become vestals; such as are famous for covetousness, and for preaching against it.

These are those inexorable spiritual Cato's, those parsimonious dispensers of mercy; perhaps out of a mistaken fear, upon the knowledge of their own wickedness, lest there should not be mercy enough for themselves.

Thus the late casuists of the church of Rome, what great things do they speak of man's power to merit, to fulfil and over-

do the law, to a higher uncommanded strain of perfection; and yet what puddles, what sinks of impurity are their books of casuistical divinity; what horrid loose maxims have they, that not only undermine Christianity, but even extinguish and cut the bands of all morality! Which licentious doctrines have already kindled such a flame in that church, as, for ought I know, may burn to its confusion.

But to return to our subject: we shall still find, that such as are most merciless to dying sinners, in stopping up the passages of repentance and salvation against them, do yet relax this rigour, and walk by another rule themselves: unless perhaps it may properly be said, that they walk by no rule at all.

And experience has shown, that those spiritual guides who are the most austere in their own lives, the greatest and most rigid exactors of duty from themselves, and of the most improved acquaintance and converse with God: yet when such come to deal with dying sinners, they handle their wounds more gently, treat them with more relencings and compassion, open the treasures of pardoning mercy to them more freely, and are glad to see any glimmerings of sincerity and contrition, that may warrant them to send the repenting sinner out of the world with a full and a free absolution.

And the reason of this is, because such, by a continual strict living up to the precepts of Christ, come at length to partake of the spirit and temper of Christ; who of all men that ever lived, or shall live in the world, was the freest even from the least stain of sin, and yet was the most boundless and enlarged in his compassion to sinners. And certainly should he now live and converse with us, he that raised sinners from their graves, would not now condemn them upon their death-beds.

And thus, I think, that I have not only answered, but also cleared off all objections against this doctrine, so that it may henceforward pass for a gospel truth; which that I may yet further confirm, I shall produce positive arguments to prove and assert it.

1. The first shall be taken from this consideration; that such a repentance commenced at the last hour of a man's life, has *de facto* proved effectual to salvation; and therefore there is no repugnancy in the nature of the thing itself, but that it may do so again. The consequence is clear; for that which is impossible in itself, can never be verified so much as in any one single instance; and that if it were impossible for any repentance beginning at the latter end of a man's life, that is, just before his death, to prove saving, no one man whatsoever so repenting could be saved.

But the falsity of this evidently appears from that eminent and known instance of the thief upon the cross; whose repentance began no sooner than his crucifixion, and yet it ended with the rewards of paradise. And who knows, but that God in-



tended this signal instance to remain as a perpetual remedy against despair, to sinners repenting in any part of their lives? And there are some doctrines, that God does not think fit to set down and express in open terms, lest the corruption of our nature might abuse them to presumption; but rather to hint them to us in an example, and to represent them in the person of another: leaving us by rational discourse, to apply the same to ourselves when we are in the like condition.

As for instance: should God have said in express terms, that though a man murders his neighbour, and commits adultery with his wife, yet, if he repents, such sins should not hinder his salvation: such a declaration as this, given antecedently to those villainous actions, would have been apt to have encouraged the wicked hearts of men much more boldly to have ventured upon the commission of them. But now should any one chance to be plunged into such enormous sins as these, that he might not here, subsequently to the act, which cannot be recalled, utterly cast off all thoughts of mercy, and consequently of returning to God, for the obtaining of mercy, God has discovered so much compassion in the pardon of David, guilty of the same sins, upon his sincere repentance, as to keep such a one from despair, and to warrant him his pardon, if, upon the same sins he acts the same repentance.

The same very possibly might be the design of the Spirit here, not to make any such declaration of pardon openly and expressly to death-bed penitents, lest by accident it might open a door of license to sin: but rather to preach it more tacitly to our reasons, in the example of the thief upon the cross; that in case a sinner be overtaken and brought upon his death-bed, he might not yet despair, seeing one before him obtaining pardon in the same condition.

2. The second argument is taken from the truth and certainty of that saying, owned and attested by God himself, in 2 Cor. viii. 12, that if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that a man hath not." That is, it is accepted instead of the deed, when the deed, through some outward impediment, not within the power of man to remove or remedy, becomes impracticable.

Now, when a penitent upon his death-bed has wrought his repentance to the highest resolutions and most sincere purposes of future obedience, if God immediately put a period to his life, is it any fault of his if he is taken off from so full an execution of those purposes as he intended? Certainly God, who can pierce into his soul, and view the sincerity of those resolutions, seeing that, in case he should live many years, they would be all performed, and actually drawn forth into so many years' obedience, he cannot but rate those intentions according to the utmost effect and issue that they would have had under such opportunities.

And as for the time, so also for the quality of the duty : where God has visited a man with such bodily weakness, that he cannot move or stir from his bed, do we not think that God accepts his desire to attend the church, to kneel in prayer, with other acts of devotion to which the body must concur, as truly and really, as if he had strength of body actually to perform all these? Truly, if we deny that he does, we have strange thoughts of the equity and goodness of his nature ; and degrade his mercy to a pitch below the mercies of an earthly father, and the dispensations of a prudent governor.

Indeed, when God is said in such a case to accept of the will, and to dispense with the deed, it is only a further explication of that known, unalterable rule of justice, that God cannot command or require the performance of a thing impossible. But should he exact the deed, when the weakness of a man's condition utterly disables him to perform it ; should he command a bedrid person to stand or kneel, or require ten years' practice of holiness from him that is to live but an hour, what could this be but to rank his commands amongst those unreasonable, tyrannical injunctions that will and require impossibilities ?

3. The third argument why a death-bed repentance may prove effectual is, because repentance saves not, as it is a work, or such a number of works ; but as it is the effect of a renewed nature and a sanctified heart, from which it flows. But now the renovation of our nature being the sole immediate work of God's Spirit, it may be wrought, if it so please him, in the last moment of our lives, as well as in twenty years : for, being a new creation, and the production of a quality in the soul that was not there before, there is nothing hinders, but that by an infinite power it may be transacted in an instant.

Upon which I argue thus : If God can sanctify and renew a man's nature in the last instant of his life, then a person thus sanctified is either in a state of salvation, or he is not : if not, then a man truly sanctified may be in a damnable condition ; which is false and absurd : but if he is, then, inasmuch as a death-bed penitent may be thus sanctified and renewed, he may be also in a state of salvation, which is inseparably annexed to a true sanctification.

But now, on the other hand, if we say that a man cannot be a true penitent, and in a state of salvation, unless he has spent such a considerable number of years or months in the continual exercise of holy duties ; what is this, but to ascribe his salvation to such a measure of works ? This is evident : for a death-bed penitent may have all other qualifications ; as a sanctified heart, a sincere resolution, and a direction of it to the glory of God ; so that there is nothing wanting but such a number of holy actions. Now if, notwithstanding the former qualities, salvation must be yet denied to such a penitent, is it not most clear, that salvation

is stated upon the *opus operatum* of such a parcel of holy performances? So that it is not the sincerity, but the multitude; not the kind, but the number of our actions, that must save us. Which assertion if we admit, and improve into its due consequences, I cannot see but it must needs bring us back to our beads.

4. A fourth argument is this: If to repent sincerely be a thing at the last moment of our lives impossible to be done, then, for that instant, impenitence is not a sin. For it cannot be a sin not to do that which in its nature cannot be done. The reason is, because where there is no obligation, there can be no sin, inasmuch as sin is either the transgression or omission of something that we stand obliged to do: but I have shown before, that no man can be obliged to impossibilities. It follows therefore from hence, that not to repent upon one's death-bed is no sin, because, according to the opinion hitherto maintained, to repent there is impossible. Which argument is of so much quickness and force, that were there no other, this alone were enough, both to establish ours, and to overthrow the contrary assertion.

5. The fifth argument that I shall produce is this; That to deny that a death-bed repentance can be effectual to salvation, is a clear restraint and limitation of the compass and prerogative of God's mercy.

For since it is a thing that neither involves any contradiction in itself, nor yet to any one of God's attributes, it is both an impudent and an insolent thing for any man to deny the possibility of it. For shall we prescribe to omnipotence, or set bounds to an infinite mercy, and say, that this and this it can do; but this it cannot? What, if God, "willing to show the riches of his mercy," calls and accepts of some at the very last hour of the day, and rewards them equally with those that came in at the first: have we any thing to reply at such a proceeding, or to carp at his justice, or to murmur at our brother's felicity? God expressly says, that his thoughts are not as our thoughts; nor his mercies as our mercies. And indeed, sad and lamentable were the condition of most sinners, if they were. The number of those that should be saved would be much less, and the volume of the book of life contracted to a very small epitome. I should think it therefore much more agreeable to a pious sobriety, to acquiesce in the method of God's dealing; and, according to rule of the civil law, rather to amplify than to limit acts of favour.

If God brings a sinner to himself at the last, and so makes his death-bed a portal and entrance to heaven; if he accepts of the purposes, and crowns the short endeavours of a late repentance with life and glory; I, for my part, have nothing to do here, but to congratulate the person that obtains, and to adore the mercy that gives it.

6. The sixth and last argument for the confirmation of the

same truth is this: That if a death-bed repentance cannot possibly be effectual to salvation, then a sinner upon his death-bed, having not repented before, may lawfully, and without sin, despair. The reason is clear; for where the proper object of hope ceases, which is possibility of pardon, there despair must lawfully succeed! for despair is then only a sin when there is ground of hope, of which here there is none. In short, despair cannot be sinful where it is rational; but it is most rational to despair of salvation, when the only means of attaining it, which is repentance, becomes impossible.

But now, I desire any one to show me any thing in the gospel, that admits of despair in the time of this life; nay, that does not proscribe and condemn it as utterly sinful; it is proper only to the state of the damned, whose condition God has declared to be remediless. But God has not signified that a sinner, in any part of his life whatsoever, is out of all possibility of mercy, and salvation. Indeed, as a man dies, so he continues for ever; but while he lives, his condition is alterable.

And therefore that assertion that must engage a man both certainly and lawfully to despair, while he is on this side death, is surely a branch of a new, unheard-of gospel and divinity.

And thus I have endeavoured to demonstrate, that it is not impossible for a man effectually to repent upon his death-bed. Which doctrine, if it be true, truth, as such, cannot be hurtful, however by accident and abuse it may.

But I shall now proceed, from these arguments, to such considerations as will be more strong to keep off the encroachments of presumption, than these can be to invite them. And so I am come to

II. The second general head proposed for the management of this subject, viz. that *supposing that a death-bed repentance may, in the issue, prove effectual, yet for any one to design and build upon it beforehand, is highly dangerous, and therefore absolutely irrational.* The truth of which will be made to appear from these considerations.

1. The first shall be taken from the exceeding unfitness of a man at this time, above all others, to exercise this duty. Repentance is a work that will take up the whole soul; that will distend every faculty, and fill every part and power of it, even when it is in its most vigorous, fresh, and active condition.

It is transacted by the sublimest and most refined operation of the soul, which is reflection. The soul must retreat into itself, view its accounts, and summon the records of memory, to give in a faithful relation of all a man's past sins, of all the passages and remarks of his former life. And, having done this, the mind must dwell upon a sad and severe consideration of the nature, degrees, and aggravating circumstances of each sin, till thought

improves into affection, and opens the penitential sluices, and fills the heart with sorrow, mourning, and weeping for sin; which sorrow for sin rising higher and higher, till at length it ends in detestation of it, and resolutions against it, it becomes the first degree of a true repentance. But is a man fit to encounter and run through all these difficulties amidst those many impediments, both natural and civil, that clog and hang about him in his death-bed condition?

And first, for natural hindrances; his memory will be weak and treacherous, his judgment infirm, and his apprehension slow and dark. And then, perhaps, all these disabilities may be increased by the accession of bodily distempers: either lethargies may dispirit and benumb him, or some acute painful disease divert and enrage him. So that the whole man is in a tumult and disorder: within is weakness, without is pain; his intellectuals forsake him; his fever scorches him; life is troublesome, and yet death terrible. In short, the man is very unfit to use his reason to remember, or contemplate; and, being so, how can he be fit to repent? which is a work that includes in it all these operations.

But we will suppose the death-bed penitent, by the mercy of Providence, pretty well freed from these natural impediments, and that he has a good proportion of memory, a good reserve of judgment, with a readiness to apprehend and discern, and to exercise the several functions of a rational nature. Yet then there are civil obstructions, worldly encumbrances, settling the estate, providing for friends, satisfying the craving importunities of relations. And what can a poor, dying man do, when such a swarm of troublesome thoughts are buzzing about him? How can he recollect and compose himself to a meditation of his past actions, when he is busied in settling things for the future?

Repentance is too great a thing to be wielded in such a hurry. No sooner, perhaps, is a man setting himself to clear old scores between God and his soul, but his worldly creditors come bawling upon him for another kind of satisfaction. No sooner does he set himself to mourn and weep for his sins, but he is interrupted with the tears of those that stand weeping for him.

This is his case: and now, can any rational person in the world judge that a death-bed is the proper scene of repentance? That a dying person, racked with pain, choked with phlegm, immersed and even buried in encumbrances, before he is dead, can be fit to manage the spiritual-searching severities of this duty?

The apostle observes well, in 2 Tim. ii. 4, that "no man that warreth, entangled himself with the affairs of this life." And indeed repentance is a kind of spiritual warfare: but certainly none so unfit for a war as a dying person.

There are some duties, whose performance so properly belongs to some certain time, that they can neither with ease nor order be performed out of it. Repentance is the work of life, and the

business of health. And truly, that man has mistimed his work, and misplaced his occasions, who, when he comes upon his death-bed, has any thing else to do, than the proper business of that place, which is, to die.

2. The other reason is taken from this consideration, that there can be no arguments from which either the dying person himself, or others by him, can certainly conclude that his repentance is sound and effectual. I speak of ordinary means of knowledge; for it is confessed, that God, by an extraordinary manner, may reveal it to a man: and as he gave him the grace of true repentance, so he may give him an assurance and certain knowledge of the truth of that repentance.

But by the ordinary, usual methods of discourse, the dying penitent cannot infallibly know it; the reason is, because he has no infallible medium to introduce him to such a knowledge.

The mediums by which he must collect it can be no other than these three: 1. The heartiness of his present resolutions, in relation to a future amendment; or, 2. The great expressions of sorrow that he makes for his past sins; or, 3. His solicitous concernment for his estate in the next world. But all these, according to the cognizance that a death-bed penitent can take of them, are very fallible.

For the first, his resolutions, though God, who quenches not the smoking flax, will by no means reject these, if sincere; but will own the work of his grace, though less kindled in the first true intention, as much as if it flamed out in a constant and glorious practice: yet in regard the opportunities of performing those death-bed resolutions are in a great measure cut off, the death-bed penitent cannot be assured that his resolutions are true. For a man may think that he heartily resolves against a sin, when indeed he does not; his own heart deceiving him. As in a man's life-time, he often finds, by experience, that when he has taken up firm purposes and resolves against a sinful course, so that, as he thinks, he shall never relapse into it again; yet, notwithstanding upon the next temptation, all such resolutions disband and vanish, and the proposal is complied with; which clearly shows that these purposes and resolutions were indeed false and deceitful.

And now, how does the death-bed penitent know, but the resolutions he makes there may be as weak and unsincere, as those that heretofore he made, and broke in the time of his health? Possibly they may be sincere; but he certainly cannot know it, but God alone, who only can foresee whether, in case his life should be prolonged, those resolves would be made actuate in performance.

And then for the other two things, his vehement expressions of sorrow, and his concernment about his salvation, are of as uncertain information as the other. For a man may mourn and weep for those sins, which he yet afterwards returns to, continues

in, and perhaps dies under; which shows that tears and sighs, and complaints, and all other expressions of sorrow whatsoever, are utterly fallacious. But in the state a man now is, all these may very well be presumed to issue from the fear and terror of an approaching damnation. And fear is a kind of constraint and violence upon the will; so that all school-men unanimously hold, that actions proceeding from fear are of a mixed nature, and not perfectly voluntary.

Now all fear is from a principle of self-love; and therefore all religious actions, commenced upon this motive, are spurious and rejected by God.

This supposed, I affirm, that it is more than ten to one but that all the pomp of a death-bed repentance, in its highest and most angelical resolutions, in its most sorrowful, mournful, and affectionate discoveries, moves wholly upon this false spring of fear, suggested upon the dismal apparition of the nearness of death, and the frightful thoughts of a miserable eternity.

It is highly probable that there is scarce one of a hundred in this condition, but goes off with the forced sorrows of fear, instead of repentance; and so dies rather terrified than sanctified.

And would not any rational man here rather fear and suspect that his lot may fall amongst the hundred, than promise himself, that he shall be that one exempted person? Certainly it is ill venturing the salvation of an immortal soul upon such huge unlikelihoods, such vast disparities.

But to conclude, and wrap up all that I have said for and against a death-bed repentance; I aver, that it is not at all in a man's power, but only in God's; and that God, being offended with a wicked life, is more likely to deny than to give it at the hour of death; that a man has all the indispositions of body and mind imaginable to unfit and disable him for it; that it is very seldom true, always suspicious; and that when true, yet it is not discernible by any certain, infallible sign to be so; in short, that it is most difficult, doubtful, dangerous, and very improbable.

In fine, I have this alone to say for it, (and to a considering person I need say no more against it,) that it is only not impossible.

To Almighty God be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

## SERMON VII.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION A PROOF OF HIS DIVINITY.

ROMANS I. 3, 4.

Περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαβὶδ, κατὰ σάρκα· τοῦ ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης, ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν.)

*Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*

In these words we have an adequate and entire description of the person of Christ. For in the third verse his human nature, and in the fourth his divine, is fully and exactly represented to us.

I delight not, I must confess, to insist much upon philological or philosophical discourses in dispensing the word; but where the construction of the text lies so, that we cannot otherwise reach the full sense of it, but by making our way through doubts and ambiguities, we must have recourse to such expedients.

The present exercise, therefore, shall consist of these two parts.

I. An explication of the words.

II. An accommodation of them to the present occasion.

I. For the first of these we must know, that the scheme of the Greek carries a very different face from our translation, which difference renders the sense of the words very disputable.

The explication of which I shall comprise in the resolution of these four inquiries.

1. Whether the translation rightly renders it, that Christ was "declared to be the Son of God," since the original admits of a different signification.

2. What is imported by this term, "with power."

3. What is intended by the following words, "according to the spirit of holiness."

4. And lastly, how those words, "by the resurrection from the dead," are to be understood.

In all which (as the resolution will manifest the reason of the doubt) I shall be as brief as I can; for if I should give myself scope to pursue each particular through all the difficulties that



might attend it, it would fill a much larger discourse than the measure of the present exercise would allow. After which explication I shall show that the resurrection of Christ is the greatest and the principal argument to prove the divinity of his person.

I. And for the first of these : that which we render "declared," is in the Greek *ἀποθέντος*, which may signify *decreed* or *determined* ; and accordingly the vulgar Latin reads it *prædestinatus*, and some other *destinatus est*. But with what propriety, or indeed with what tolerable sense, Christ could be said to be decreed to be the Son of God, which he was from eternity ; and especially to be decreed to be so by the resurrection from the dead, a thing that had happened very lately, is hard to understand, and much harder to make out. That which is the proper object of *decree* or *destination* is something future ; but that which was eternal cannot be imagined in any period of time to be future.

Those, indeed, who deny the eternal godhead of Christ, and date his deity entirely, and his sonship principally, from his resurrection, are great friends to this exposition of the word ; and well they may be so, for it serves their turn to very great purposes : for if Christ was constituted eminently the Son of God at and by his resurrection, it might very properly be said of him, that he was decreed so to be antecedently to his resurrection ; but how this can consist with the supposition of his eternal godhead, I must profess I cannot apprehend.

Aquinas, indeed, retains this interpretation of the word by *prædestinatus est* ; but it was the gross ignorance of the Greek tongue, and all critical learning in those days, that betrayed so great a judgment to the inconvenience of holding that, of which to give a rational account he took so much pains, and to so little purpose.

Erasmus therefore observes (whose authority in this sort of learning is inferior to none), that there is another proper signification of the word *ἀρίζω*, besides to *decree* or *determine*, and that is, to *declare*, *show forth*, or *manifest* ; hence in grammar the indicative mood is called *ἀριστοιχός* ; and in logic the definition of a thing, which is the declaration of its nature, is called *ὅρος*, or *ὁρισμός* ; all which confirm this interpretation.

And for the agreeableness of it to this place, besides the utter disagreeableness of any other signification ; that is proved from hence, as that it carries a most fit and emphatical opposition to the words of the former verse, where the apostle expresses Christ's human nature by *γενομένου*, "he was made of the seed of David," which word imports the constitution of something that did not exist before ; but here in this verse, expressing his divine nature, since he had from eternity been the Son of God, it is not said of him that he was *made*, but only *declared* or *manifested* to be so.

Besides, the apostle here speaks of things past and already done ; which being so, with what propriety could he insist upon a thing only as decreed and purposed, after it had actually come to pass? especially since it was this only which here made for his purpose. His design was to prove Christ the Son of God by an argument taken from a thing known and notable, which was his resurrection ; and would any rational disputer omit this, that he was actually risen, and argue only from this, that it *was* decreed that he should rise from the dead? According to the natural way of speaking, men never use to say that such a thing is decreed, or purposed, after once that decree, or purpose, has passed into execution. And so much for explication of the first term.

2. The second inquiry is, what is imported by this term “with power;” the Greek is *ἐν δυνάμει*, “in power,” so that by some it is rendered *in virtute*: but it being not unusual for the particle *ἐν* to be put for *ὀν*, it is most properly rendered in our translation “with power;” which, though some understand of the power of Christ, as it exerted itself in the miracles which he did; yet here it signifies rather the glorious power of his divine nature, by which he overcame death, and properly opposed to the weakness of his human nature, by which he suffered it. Correspondent to which is that place in 2 Cor. xiii. 4, “He was crucified by weakness, but he liveth by the power of God.” That is, the weakness of his humanity made him capable of the death of the cross; but the power of his divinity triumphed over that death, and raised him to eternal life.

3. The third thing to be inquired into is, what is the intent of the following words, “according to the spirit of holiness.” The expression is a Hebraism, and signifies as much as the Holy Spirit; but what is the meaning of that here, is the doubt to be resolved.

Some understand it only as a further explication of the precedent word *ἐν δυνάμει*, taking both that and this for the miraculous works done by the Spirit of God to confirm the gospel: for still we shall find that the miracles of Christ and his apostles were ascribed to the Spirit of God; which exposition cannot stand, for these reasons:

(1.) Because it ought then to have been joined with the precedent words by conjunction, *καὶ ἐν δυνάμει, καὶ κατὰ πνεῦμα*.

(2.) Because in right construction it should have been *πνεύματι*, or *διὰ πνεύματος*, “by the Spirit,” noting the efficient cause; not “according to the Spirit,” as it is here; for *κατὰ πνεῦμα* can never be brought to have an equivalent signification to *διὰ πνεύματος*.

In the next place, therefore, if we observe the connexion between this and the former verse, we shall find that there is a certain antithesis between them; and that as *κατὰ σάρκα* signifies the human nature of Christ, so *κατὰ πνεῦμα* may most appositely signify the divine: for it is not unusual in scripture for the

divine nature to be rendered by the word *spirit*; John iv. 24, "God is a spirit;" and 1 Tim. iii. 16, it is said, in respect of Christ, that "God was manifested in the flesh, but justified in the Spirit;" that is, he was proved to have a divine nature, as well as a human. And now here, because the apostle had expressed the humanity of Christ, not by κατ' ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν, or κατ' ἄνθρωπον, but κατὰ σάρκα, namely, the better to set forth the frailty and gross substance of the human nature; by way of opposition, he renders his divinity by κατὰ πνεῦμα, a word properly corresponding to κατὰ σάρκα, and withal importing the vigorous and refined substance of this nature. And whereas he annexes this qualification of holiness, and calls it "the spirit of holiness," it is because he considers not the divine nature of Christ, absolutely in itself, but according to the relation it had to, and the great effect that it exercised upon his other nature. For it was his divinity which sanctified, consecrated, and hypostatically deified his humanity; and in that respect it is here treated of by the apostle.

4. I come now to the explication of that fourth and last expression, "by the resurrection from the dead," which is exceeding different from the original, according to the first and literal appearance of the sentence. For the words "Jesus Christ our Lord," which in the translation are placed in the beginning of the third verse, in the Greek are the last words of the fourth; which has occasioned great diversity in the construction. The words in the original are these, ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν. So that what we render "by the resurrection from the dead," is word for word to be rendered, "by the resurrection of the dead of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Whereupon some interpret it not of Christ's personal resurrection; which, they say, ought to have been ἐκ νεκρῶν, not simply νεκρῶν; but either of the resurrection of those, who in Matthew are said to have risen from their graves, at the time of Christ's crucifixion, or of the general resurrection of all the saints; who are therefore called the *dead* of Jesus Christ, to discriminate them from the wicked and the reprobates, who, though they shall rise again, yet bear not this relation to Christ.

Accordingly they take the word ἀνάστασις actively for the action of Christ, by his power raising them from the dead: forasmuch as otherwise their being raised from the dead would not have had so immediate a force to prove Christ to be the Son of God.

But that the words are not so to be rendered, nor consequently to be understood of the resurrection of any but of Christ himself, is clear, upon the strength of this reason; that (as I have partly observed already) the apostle's design here is to demonstrate to the Romans the divinity of Christ, by some signal passage already done, and so familiarly known by them. But the general resurrection was as yet future, and the resurrection

of those few, it is probable, was not so famed a thing, as to have been commonly known amongst them: especially since there is mention of it only in St. Matthew, but in none else, either of the apostles or evangelists; who, being so diligent in representing all those arguments that seemed to prove the divinity of Christ, had they apprehended this to have been so clear and immediate an argument for the proof of it, certainly would not have thus passed it over in silence.

I conclude therefore, that it is to be understood of the personal resurrection of Christ from the dead. So that the only thing that remains for us is, to solve and make out the construction: for which, though several ways may be assigned, yet the most rational is to refer the words Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν, by apposition to the precedent words in the former verse, περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ; not making it to be governed of νεκρῶν; so that, in the Latin translation, Jesus Christ is not to be rendered by the genitive, but by the ablative case; it being repeated after the intervening words by an hyperbaton; a figure usual in the writings of this apostle; whose expression must be acknowledged to be none of the easiest or clearest.

Neither is it material that the particle *ex* is not prefixed to νεκρῶν, to make it *from the dead*; since it is usual amongst the Greeks to omit prepositions, such as ἐν, ἐξ, and ἀπὸ; as also amongst the Latins, with whom *surrexit terra* is all one with *surrexit a terra*. But above all this, the preposition here may be so much the better omitted, since the very word ἀνάστασις carries in it the force of this preposition; forasmuch as it denotes a motion or recess from a certain place or state.

And thus I have given an explication of the words, the first thing proposed for the management of this subject; which explication has been, I confess, something large; but I hope, to those who understand these matters, is not altogether useless.

II. I come now to the second general head, which is, *the accommodation of the words to the present occasion*; and that shall be in showing, that Christ's resurrection is the greatest and the principal argument to prove him the Son of God. Now both the foundation and sum of the gospel lies within the compass of this proposition, *that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God*; from which one aphorism spring all the other branches of Christianity. For that which properly discriminates the Christian religion from the natural, or Judaical, is the holding of Christ's deity, and his satisfaction naturally consequent upon it: to both which together are reducible all the parts of the gospel, as appendages to, or conclusions naturally flowing from them.

But it is not here to be denied, that Christ is capable of being called the Son of God in several respects; as that, according to his human nature, he had no natural father, but was produced in

the womb of his mother by the immediate power of God; as also for his resemblance to God, upon the accounts of his transcendent holiness: it being proper to call him the Son of God who does the works of God (as Christ called the Jews the sons of the devil, for doing the works of the devil, John iii. 44): "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do:" all great likeness, in the scripture dialect, founding the denomination of sonship. Christ might be also called the Son of God, from his having the government of all things put into his hands upon his ascension. All this must be granted: yet here we are to consider only the principal and grand cause of his being called so; which is from the eternal generation and emanation of his person from the person of the Father; that is, we are to consider him to be the Son of God upon such an account, as may also infer and prove him to be God himself.

Now this supereminent way of sonship being the foundation of his deity, as that is the foundation of our religion, ought in reason to be evinced by some great and evidently conclusive argument; and such a one we affirm to have been his resurrection.

But you will here naturally reply, How can this be a proper proof of that? How can his resurrection, which supposes him to have been dead, prove him to be such a one as existed from all eternity, and so could not die? Is the grave a medium to demonstrate a person incorruptible? or death, to enforce that he is immortal? I answer, that this argumentation is so far very right; and that the resurrection, considered only in a bare relation to the person rising from the dead, proves him only to be a wonderful man; but is so far from proving him the eternal Son of God, that it rather proves the contrary. But then, if we consider it with relation to the doctrine of that person affirming himself to be thus the Son of God, and as the seal set to the truth of that doctrine by an omnipotent hand and an unfailing veracity; why, thus it is an infallible argument to prove the real being of all those things that were asserted by that person. Christ's resurrection therefore proved him to be the eternal Son of God consequentially; that is, as it was an irrefragable confirmation of the truth of that doctrine which had declared him to be so.

It is much disputed, whether Christ's resurrection is to be referred to his own power raising himself from the dead, or only to the power of the Father. Those who deny his eternal divinity allow only this latter, stiffly opposing the former. To give countenance to this their opposition, they seem to make challenge to any one to produce but one place of scripture, where Christ is said to have raised himself from the dead, and they will yield the cause. To which I answer; though this is nowhere affirmed in these very terms, representing it *in præterito*, as done; yet if

Christ spoke the same thing in words importing the future, the result is undoubtedly the same. And for this, I desire to know what they will answer to that place, John ii. 19, where Christ, speaking of his body, says, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Does not Christ personally appropriate the action to himself and to his own power? Wherefore that exception is a vapour and a caviil, unbecoming a rational opponent.

But I add, that as to the proof of the divinity of Christ's person, it is not material whether his resurrection be stated upon his own power, or the power of his Father; for both equally prove the same thing, though in a different manner.

If Christ raised himself, it directly proves that he was God, and so had a divine nature, besides his human: for if he raised that, being dead, it must needs follow, that he did it by virtue of a power inherent in another nature, which was some divine spirit.

But, on the other hand, if the Father raised him, yet still it proves him to have been God; forasmuch as he always avouched himself to be so; and the Father would not have exerted an infinite power to have confirmed a lie, or verified the words of an impostor.

Having thus shown how Christ's resurrection could be a proper argument to prove his divinity and eternal sonship, I come now, in the next place, to show that it is the greatest and the principal of all others.

And for this we may observe, that the arguments for the proof of the truth of Christ's doctrine, of which the sum is, that he himself is the Son of God, are generally reducible to these three: 1. The nature of the things taught by him. 2. The fulfilling of prophecies in his person. 3. The miracles and wonderful works which he did in the time of his life.

Now to prove that his resurrection was an argument surpassing all these, I shall premise this one consideration; that whatsoever is brought as an argument to prove a thing demonstratively, ought to be in itself not only true, but evident and clear. Forasmuch as to prove a thing is properly to make it evident, but nothing can make another thing evident which is not so itself; nay, more evident than the thing to be proved by it. This being premised, let us take a brief examination of each.

1. And first for the nature of the things which he taught. If you take a view of those which relate to practice; as, that we are to take no thought for the morrow, to take up our cross daily, and to renounce all the enjoyments of those things which were made only to be enjoyed; not to resist evil, nor to defend ourselves, but being smitten upon one cheek to turn the other; and when the oppressor has robbed me of my coat, to gratify him with my cloak also: which is, in effect, to relinquish the grand rights of nature, and the eternal principle of self-preservation,

written in the hearts of all men with the pen of an adamant : furthermore, that for every petty anger we are responsible to the degree of murder ; and that for every idle word we are liable to eternal damnation ; that is, to a perpetuity of torments, not only unsupportable, but unconceivable ; with several other such articles of the same nature.

Now I say, what strange, unusual, and grating documents are these to the nature and universal apprehensions of man's reason ! How does this, as it were, start and fly back at the direful appearance of these severities, as much fitter to terrify than to persuade, to confound than to conquer the affections ; and therefore, if these have any influence upon man's belief (as undoubtedly they have a very great one), we may be sure that such aphorisms shall never find any credit for their own sake, nor can it be expected that they should.

But then again ; if we cast our eye upon what things Christ taught relating to belief ; as that the divine nature being most simply and indivisibly one, there are yet three persons in it, every one of which is truly and properly God. Also, that the same person should be God and man ; and that person, in his human nature, should be born of a virgin ; that he should die, and make satisfaction for the sins of the world ; and that there should be a resurrection of all mankind with the same bodies, though consumed many thousand years since, and by infinite changes transformed into other things ; and all this to a state of happiness or misery, of which there shall be no end.

Now how much stranger are these than the former ! How do they look more like riddles than instruction ! designed rather to astonish than to inform the man's understanding.

A great part of the world reject them all, as absolute paradoxes, and contrary to reason, and we ourselves confess them to be above reason ; so that from our confession it will follow, that they are not to be believed for themselves.

I conclude therefore, that though these things are in themselves most true, yea, as true as the most evident proposition in the mathematics ; yet because they are not at all evident, they are utterly unable to give evidence to the truth of that doctrine which does assert them.

2. The second argument of the truth of Christ's doctrine, and consequently of his divinity, is from the fulfilling of prophecies in his person. An argument no question very solid, and really conclusive, but perhaps not so clear and demonstrative as to silence very great exceptions. For the ways of interpreting prophecies are so various, as to be here attended with such allowances, and there again bound up with such limitations, such distinctions between the literal and mystical intention of them, and such great difficulty to prove when one is to be pitched upon, and when the other, that he who shall look into this matter will

find, that this argument is not so absolutely full, nor so totally commands down the difficulty, as to render all additional arguments superfluous.

The modern Jews are so expert and versed in this particular, that there is not a text or prophecy throughout all the Old Testament, but they will readily give you such an interpretation of it as shall not at all relate to Jesus Christ. Nay, and there have not been wanting some such amongst the Christians; one I am sure there has been, who has endeavoured to show, that all or most of those places in the Old Testament, which the Christian church generally applies to Christ, have had an actual and literal completion in some other before him, and so belong to him only by accommodation; which to a Jew (should you dispute with him, would upon another beg the question) would signify as much as nothing.

Though when such persons have shown all the tricks they can upon the scripture, for I must needs call it showing tricks upon it rather than expounding it: I say, still there remain some portions of it which point to Christ with such a pregnant and invincible clearness, such as the twenty-second Psalm and the fifty-third of Isaiah, that they cannot without an apparent force, and a visible wresting them from their genuine sense, be applied to any else. And what good design to Christian religion any one could have in giving them such an interpretation, as makes them in the first and literal purport of them, not at all to relate to Christ, surpasses my understanding to give any tolerable account of.

3. The third argument is taken from the wonderful works that Christ did during his lifetime; all which were undoubtedly high proofs of the truth of the doctrine which they were brought to prove, and consequently of the divinity of Christ's person, and of his mission. They were the syllogisms of heaven, and the argumentations of omnipotence.

Yet over these also Christ's resurrection had a vast preeminence, and that I prove upon the strength of these two considerations.

(1.) That all the miracles Christ did, supposing that his resurrection had not followed, would not have had sufficient efficacy to have proved him to be the Messias. But his resurrection alone, taking it single and by itself, and without any relation to his precedent miracles, had been a full and undeniable proof of the truth of his doctrine and the divinity of his person. The former part of the assertion is clear from that of St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 14, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain;" and in the 17th verse, "Ye are yet in your sins." Now before Christ's death all his miracles were actually done, and yet, notwithstanding all these, the apostle lays this supposition, that in case then he had not risen from the dead, the whole proof of the gospel had fallen to the ground, and been buried with him in the same grave.



And for the other part of the assertion, that Christ's resurrection alone, without respect to his miracles, had been a sufficient demonstration of the truth of his doctrine, that appears upon these two accounts :

1st. That the thing considered absolutely in itself, according to the greatness and wonder of it, did transcend and outweigh all the rest of his works put together.

2dly. That it had a more intimate and near connexion with his doctrine than any of the rest : and that not only by way of inference, as a sign proving it, but by way of real effect, as it enabled him to give being and subsistence to the things which he had said and promised. He had promised to send the gifts of the Holy Ghost upon his disciples to fit them to promulge the gospel ; he had promised also to raise up those that believed in him to life eternal at the last day ; which are two of the principal parts and pillars of the doctrine delivered by him. But for him to have done this not rising from the dead, but continuing under a state of death, had been utterly impossible.

(2.) The second consideration upon which I ground the pre-eminence of Christ's resurrection above all the rest of his miracles, is the general opinion and judgment that the world had of both. For besides, that upon Christ's doing the most strange and signal of his miracles, you will find that they did not convince men so potently, but that while some believed, as many or more went away with the same unbelief of him that they brought ; so we shall find moreover, that they were still resolving them into some other cause short of a divine power ; as, that he " cast out devils by the prince of the devils," Matt. xii. 24. And they generally looked upon him as a conjuror, and as one who had commerce with a more potent spirit or demon, by whose assistance he was too hard for the rest. But now observe ; when they came to that great and difficult problem of his resurrection, they never attempted to assign any causes of that besides the power of God, so as by that means to depress the miraculousness of it ; but they absolutely deny the matter of fact, and set themselves to prove that there was no such thing.

And to this day the modern Jews, who hold Christ to have been an impostor, do yet for all that grant the history of his miracles ; that he did most of those strange, stupendous works reported of him ; but still they persist in a denial of his resurrection.

All which shows, that they tacitly confess, that should they grant this one thing, that Christ was risen from the dead, they could have no reason to except against his person or doctrine ; but must needs acknowledge, that being owned in such an immediate, undeniable way, by the power of God himself, and that in the grand and crowning passage of his doctrine, all that he said was true, and consequently that he himself was the Messiah, and Son of God.

But they thought his other miracles carried no such cogent evidence in them, but that they had so much to except against their being convinced by them, as to warrant their unbelief. Which exceptions, I conceive, may be reduced to these two heads.

1st. The great difficulty of discerning when an action is really a miracle ; which difficulty lies in this : that since a miracle is properly such an action as exceeds the force and power of natural or second causes ; to the discerning of it so to be, it is required, that a man knows the utmost extent and just measure of the power of those causes, how far it extends, and where it ends, before he can certainly pronounce that such an action or effect does exceed it : and consequently that it is a miracle. But now, I defy the greatest and the most indefatigable searches of nature to give me in such an account of the activity and force of all natural causes, as to state the just boundaries and portions of their power. I cannot easily believe that any one would be so impudent, as to pretend to such an achievement.

But admit that some men, by the singular dexterity of their wit, and their profound experience, were able to do this ; yet how will vulgar minds, which have neither ability nor opportunity to make these inquiries, be able to assure themselves, that such an action is above the force of nature, and therefore to be ascribed to a supernatural power ?

These men, not being able to look beyond the outward bulk and first appearance of an action, determine miracles, not from the principle that causes them, but from the wonder that they find caused by them in themselves : which wonder arises from the unusualness of the thing, and their utter ignorance of the reason of it. As for instance, suppose a man should come amongst a rude, barbarous sort of people, and affirm to them strange things, as a message from God ; and, to verify his words, should assure them that he would make such a piece of iron come to him of its own accord, and cure any wound immediately, without any application made to it ; and accordingly should do so ; that those people, who know nothing of the force of the loadstone, or the sympathetic cure of wounds, would from hence conclude that this man did those things by a divine power, and consequently that his message was of divine authority, I do no more doubt, than that I am now speaking.

2dly. But then, in the next place, supposing that an action is fully known to be a miracle, it is altogether as difficult, if not more, to know whether it proves the truth of the doctrine of that person that does it, or not. The reason is, because it is not certain but that God may suffer miracles to be done by an impostor, for the trial of men, to see whether or no they will be drawn off from a received, established truth. That the Jews thought so is certain ; and they took up their persuasion from these first five verses of

Deuteronomy xiii. : "If there arise amongst you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder; and the sign or wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul." And it is added, in the fifth verse, that "that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death."

Now, though I noways question but that the main principle that acted the Jewish council in the putting of Christ to death was carnal policy, and resolution to maintain their own grandeur; yet I verily believe, that the more zealous and conscientious of them (of which sort there were, doubtless, some) commenced their proceedings against him upon the force of this law: for we must know, that it was the judgment of the Jews, that to worship other gods, was all one with worshipping the true God in any other way, besides, or opposite to, the Mosaic institution. But this was their *πρῶτον ἁμάρτια*, the first and chief error that betrayed them to all the rest.

Now supposing this to have been the sense of this law; forasmuch as they saw that Christ visibly designed an abolition of the Mosaic rites and economy hereupon, notwithstanding all the signs and wonders shown by him, they thought they had sufficient warrant to look upon him as an impostor, and to deal with him accordingly.

But moreover, as the forementioned scripture seems to prove that God may suffer true miracles to be done by him who does not always avouch a true doctrine; so the same seems yet more clear from those miracles done by several: as Vespasian is said to have cured a blind man by spitting on him, and striking him with his foot; and Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, was wont to cure persons distempered with the spleen, with a touch of his foot; and at this day the kings of England and of France cure a certain disease with a touch of their hand and a piece of money: all which cures can no more be resolved into the mere power of those agents, visibly employed in that action, than the curing of the lame or the deaf can be naturally effected with a word. And yet surely we neither believe the kings of England or France, upon this account, to be persons assisted by God, in all that they do or say, by an infallible spirit. I conclude, therefore, that it is not so easy to be assured of the truth of any doctrine upon the credit of a miracle done by the person who does promulge it.

For, to represent to you the sum of both exceptions in short; he who will assure himself of the truth of any doctrine, upon the account of any miracle done by the author of it, must first

assure himself that it is a miracle ; to be sure of which, he must understand the utmost power of all natural causes ; which I have shown is very hard, if not impossible to be compassed. And then, after that he knows it to be a miracle, before he can conclude that it proves any doctrine to be true, he must know that it was done by God with an intent to confirm that doctrine ; and not for some other end, as to try whether men will suffer themselves, by such means, to be drawn from the truth ; which, since it is not to be distinguished by any mark of difference inherent in the actions themselves, but by a knowledge of the mind of God in them, which knowledge also we cannot have, without an immediate inspection into his counsels ; it follows, that a certainty in these matters is highly difficult, and not without a very strong faith attainable. Hence it is, that the most learned writers of the Romish church, when they come to speak of the proof of the truth of any doctrine by miracles, speak exceedingly contemptibly of them : but this perhaps is no wonder, if they thought all other miracles of the same nature with those that they do themselves.

But now, neither of those two forementioned exceptions take place against the resurrection.

For first, though we cannot assign the determinate point where the power of nature ends, and so cannot possibly know every miracle ; yet there are some actions that at first appearance so vastly transcend it, that there can be no suspicion that they proceed from any power but a divine. As for instance, I cannot exactly tell how far a man may walk in a day, but yet I can tell that it is impossible for him to walk a thousand miles, by reason of the apparent disproportion between the natural strength of man, and such a performance. Now, such a thing does reason judge the raising of a dead man to life again, in reference to the force of natural causes ; which, in their utmost actings, were never observed to do any thing like it : and certainly that is not in their power to do, which from the beginning of the world was never exemplified, or actually done by them, so much as in one particular instance.

And for the second : should God suffer a miracle to be done by an impostor (which I, for my part, think he never does : but have hitherto disputed only upon a supposition of the Jews) ; yet, I say, there was no necessity hence to gather, that God did it to confirm the words of that impostor ; for God may do a miracle when and where he pleases. So that it follows not that it must needs relate to the vouching of what the impostor says. But now, Christ had so often laid the stress of the whole truth of his gospel upon this, that he would rise from the dead ; and declared to those who sought for a sign, that it was the only sign that should be given to that generation ; that God could not have raised Christ from the dead, but that this action must

needs have related to his words, and to have confirmed what Christ had said and promised, and consequently have joined with him in the imposture.

In a word; if this does not satisfy, I affirm, that it is not in the power of man to invent, or of God to do any greater thing to persuade the world of the truth of a doctrine. It would even puzzle omniscience, and nonplus omnipotence itself, to find out a brighter argument to confound infidelity. And I dare avouch, that he who believes not upon Christ's resurrection from the dead, would scarce believe, though he rose from the dead himself. So that, if after this he continues an infidel, he does, in effect, give heaven the lie, and bids the Almighty convince him if he can. He is miracle-proof, and beyond the reach of persuasion; and not like to be convinced, till it is too late for him to be converted.

But to sum up all: he who builds the grand concern of his eternal happiness upon his obedience to the gospel, as the sure way to it; and his obedience to the gospel upon a firm belief of the same; and, lastly, grounds the said belief upon a belief of Christ's resurrection, has hereby made his "calling and election as sure," as things knit together by an absolute decree and an unchangeable law are incapable of being ever disjoined or forced asunder. And therefore, instead of those uncouth, ill-sounding words used by Luther, upon another occasion, *Si decipior, Deus me decepit*, such a one may, with equal reverence and assurance, conclude, that while he believes the Christian religion true, because the great author and promulger of it "died and rose again from the dead, according to the scriptures," it will be as impossible for him, so doing, to be deceived, as it is for the God of infinite truth and goodness to deceive him.

To which God, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

## SERMON VIII.

INCREASE OF KNOWLEDGE ATTENDED WITH SORROW.

ECCLES. I. 18.

*In much wisdom there is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.*

It is a saying usual, and of great reason, that we are to believe the skilful in their own art and profession. And therefore, if we would understand the nature, properties, and effects of knowledge, none can be so fit to inform us, as he who, by the very verdict of omniscience itself, was of all men in the world the most knowing.

Nothing, indeed, is more common than for every man almost to pass a universal censure upon all persons and things; but none can despise a thing rationally, but he who knows it thoroughly. Otherwise, though a man should pass a right judgment upon a thing, yet he does it only by accident; and not by reason, but luck: and therefore, though the thing spoken be truth and wisdom, yet the speaker of it utters it like a fool. None but a scholar can be a competent judge of knowledge; and therefore all the encomiums and endless praises of it that now fly about the world, must come and be tried, and stand or fall, according to the verdict of this rule.

First therefore, we shall find those that are loudest in their commendations, and highest in their admirations of learning, are, for the most part, such as were never bred to it themselves; hence it is, that such, of all others, are the most desirous to breed their sons scholars: so that if we take a list of the most renowned philosophers in former ages, and the most eminent divines in the latter, we shall find that they were, for the most part, of mechanic, mean, and plebeian parentage.

Upon this score also there came to be so many free-schools and endowed places for learning; because those are most apt to send their children to study, who, being poor and low, are not able to maintain them in it; and therefore need the expense and benevolence of others, to bring their imprudent designs to maturity. Let this therefore be fixed upon, as one great reason that the praise of knowledge is so great in the world, viz. that much the major part of the world is ignorant. And ignorant men are indeed very fit to praise and admire, but very unfit to judge.

I am not insensible that many will here presently be apt to

stop me with those elogies that the most learned bestow upon knowledge, still adorning it with such panegyrics, such high words and expressions, as if rhetoric was invented for nothing else but to describe and set off her praise. But, in answer to this, though I might note, that to be learned and to be wise are things very different; yet I shall produce another reason of these commendations, which, in all probability, is this; that learned men would not seem and be judged fools, for spending their time upon so empty a thing; and therefore, as those that have been deceived into a ridiculous sight do yet commend it, that they may not be thought to have been deceived, but may bring others into the same cheat with themselves:

So here, should philosophers confess, that all the time they spent about *materia prima*, about *esse per se*, and *esse per accidens*, they were laboriously doing nothing; the world would be apt to hiss, and to explode them; and others would be so wise as, seeing the example, to forbear the imitation. But now, when a man finds himself to be really deceived, the only relief that remains to him, is to cover the report of it, and to get companions in the deception.

If what has been hitherto said does not satisfy, I can only take sanctuary in this; that the same was Solomon's judgment: and I desire to know, whether those philosophers, who so profusely commend learning, knew more than he, and saw that worth in knowledge which he did? As for Aristotle, who for these many ages has carried the repute of philosophy from all the rest, he certainly was not wiser than Solomon; for he is reported to have stolen most of his philosophy out of Solomon's writings, and to have suppressed them from the view of posterity.

I proceed therefore, and take up my assertion upon the warrant of his judgment, whom God has hitherto vouched the wisest of men; and therefore see no reason to alter it, till I am convinced by a wiser.

But before I make any further progress, I must premise this; that both in what has, and what shall be said by me, I design not the patronage of ignorance, especially in things spiritual: for, in this respect, we know, and are assured by the Spirit of God, that this is the condemnation of the world, that "men love darkness rather than light:" and that the blind must needs "fall into the ditch:" and for any man to expect to be saved, or to be happy, without the knowledge of the revealed will of God, in things necessary to salvation, is as great an absurdity, as to expect to see without eyes; and therefore in these matters, he that increases ignorance, increases the means of his damnation; he increases the shadow of death, adds darkness to darkness, and passes by the darkness of ignorance, to the darkness of hell and damnation.

But if any thing is indeed said against knowledge, it is against

that only that is so much adored by the world, and falsely called philosophy; and yet more significantly surnamed by the apostle "vain philosophy;" and that too, with no other intent than to dash the overweening pride of those that have it, and to divert the admiration of those that have it not, to some better and more deserving object.

But as for those parts of knowledge that are either instrumental to our knowledge of the will of God, or conduce to the good and support of society, in the state that mankind now is, I must not be thought therefore to speak against them, if from the text I impartially show those infelicities, those miseries and sorrows, that through our sin and weakness they are attended with. It is the effect of sin, that duty is accompanied with sorrow: and that by such an unfortunate necessity of grief, we cannot attain the joy and happiness we design to ourselves in the end, unless for a time we quit it in the use of the means.

Now the design of this portion of scripture is to rectify the absurd opinions of the world, concerning the great idol of mankind, knowledge; and to take down their excessive estimation of it, by showing that it is the cause, or at least the inseparable companion of sorrow. And, in prosecution of the words, I shall demonstrate it to be so in these three respects:

- I. In respect of the nature and properties of the thing itself.
- II. In respect of the laborious and troublesome acquisition of it.
- III. In respect of its effects and consequents.

1. First of all then, *knowledge is the parent of sorrow from its very nature*, as being the instrument and means by which the afflicting quality of the object is conveyed to the mind; for as nothing delights, so nothing troubles till it is known. The merchant is not troubled as soon as his ship is cast away, but as soon as he hears it is.

The affairs and objects that we converse with have most of them a fitness to afflict and disturb the mind. And as the colours lie dormant, and strike not the eye, till the light actuates them into a visibility, so those afflictive qualities never exert their sting, nor affect the mind, till knowledge displays them, and slides them into the apprehension.

*Nihil scire vita jocundissima est.* It is the empty vessel that makes the merry sound. Which is evident from those whose intellectuals are ruined with frenzy or madness; who so merry, so free from the lash of care? their understanding is gone, and so is their trouble. It is the philosopher that is pensive, that looks downwards in the posture of the mourner. It is the open eye that weeps.

Aristotle affirms, that there was never a greater scholar in the world, but had in his temper a dash and mixture of melancholy;



and if melancholy be the temper of knowledge, we know that it is also the complexion of sorrow, the scene of mourning and affliction.

Solomon could not separate his wisdom from vexation of spirit. We are first taught our knowledge with the rod, and with the severities of discipline. We get it with some smart, but improve it with more.

The world is full of objects of sorrow, and knowledge enlarges our capacities to take them in. None but the wise man can know himself to be miserable.

I might now, from the nature of knowledge, pass to the properties of it, and show its uncertainty, its poorness, and utter inability to contribute any thing to the solid enjoyments of life. But before I enter upon this, there may be a question started, whether or no there be indeed any such thing as true knowledge in the world? for their want not reasons that seem to insinuate that there is none.

1. As first: because knowledge, if true, is upon that score certain and infallible; but the certainty of the knowledge cannot be greater than the certainty of the faculty, or medium, by which it is acquired; now all knowledge is conveyed through sense, and sense is subject to fallacy, to err, and to be imposed upon. For how often does our eye tell us that the trees and the banks run, and that the ship or the coach stand still! How does it abridge the sun to the compass of a few spans, to a small ignoble circumference! It follows therefore, that we cannot be assured of the truth of that knowledge that commences upon the fallible report of sense, indeed no more than we can be certain that a thing is true, because a known liar has affirmed it.

2. Knowledge is properly the apprehension of a thing by its cause; but the causes of things are not certainly known: this by most is confessed, but may be proved without confession; for since none ever assigned a certain cause of any effect, but that others, with the same probability, have assigned a clear different cause, it is most evident, that we do not certainly know the causes of things, and consequently neither the things themselves.

3. To know a thing is to apprehend it as really it is, but we apprehend things only as they appear; so that all our knowledge may properly be defined the apprehension of appearances. But now it is undeniable, that things oftentimes appear otherwise than they are; and when they do appear as indeed they are, yet there is no certain rule to discern that they do so.

Other arguments might be brought to show, that it is not without cause that there is such a set of men as sceptics in the world. And though I will not say, that these arguments prove that there is no such thing as knowledge, yet thus much, at least, they seem to prove, that we cannot be assured that there is any such thing.

But you will reply, that this overthrows the hypothesis of the

text, which supposes and takes it for granted that there is such a thing as knowledge. I answer, it does not; for the arguments proceed against knowledge, strictly and accurately so taken; but the text speaks of it in a popular way, of that which the world commonly calls and esteems knowledge.

And that this is but a poor, worthless thing, and of no efficacy to advance the real concerns of human happiness, might be made most evident.

For, first, it is certain that knowledge does not either constitute or alter the condition of things, but only transcribe and represent the face of nature as it finds it; and therefore is but a low ignoble thing, and differs as much from nature itself, as he that only reports great things from him that does them. If I should run through the whole series and scale of sciences from top to bottom, I am sure I could verify this assertion.

For what am I, or any one else the better, whether God foresees future contingents from the determination and decree of his will, or from the infinite actuality of his nature, by which his existence is beforehand with all future duration? What am I concerned, whether he punishes sin by the necessary egress of his vindictive justice, or by a freedom of choice? Of what such great necessity is it to know, whether Christ intended his death for all mankind, or only for a select company? when it is certain on both sides, that the benefit of his death is offered conditionally to all those, and only to those, who shall believe; and that upon either supposition this proposition shall surely be verified, that whosoever believes shall be saved.

And to descend to things of an inferior nature. What is it to me, whether the will has a power to determine itself, or is determined by objects from without? when it is certain that those here that hold a different opinion, yet continue in the same course and way of action.

Is any use of human life served by the knowledge of this, whether the vegetative, sensitive, and rational soul in men, be three distinct souls, or only three denominations, from three distinct operations and offices issuing from the same soul. Or am I any ways advantaged, whether the soul wills, understands, and performs the rest of its actions, by faculties distinct from itself, or immediately by its own substance?

Is it of any moment, whether the soul of man comes into the world with carnal notions, or whether it comes bare, and receives all from the after reports of sense?

What am I benefitted, whether the sun moves about the earth, or whether the sun is centre of the world, and the earth is indeed a planet, and wheels about that? Whether it be one or the other, I see no change in the course of nature. Day and night keep the same order; winter and summer observe the same returns; our fruit ripens as soon under one hypothesis as under the

other; and the day begins no sooner nor stays any longer with Ptolemy than with Copernicus.

Or what am I bettered, whether all motion is performed by faculties, powers, or inherent qualities; or in a mechanical way, by the impulse of one body upon another, the greater overcoming and moving the less?

Who in the world finds any change in his affairs, whether there be little vacuities and empty spaces in the air; or whether there is no space but what is filled and taken up with body?

What am I altered, whether colour be a quality emergent from the different contemperature of the elements; or whether it be only the reflection of the light upon the different situation of the parts of the body?

I could reckon up a hundred more such problems as these, about an inquiry into which men are so laborious, and in a supposed resolution of which they so much boast; which shows, that that which passes with the world for knowledge is but a slight trivial thing; and that men's being so eager and industrious in the quest of it, is like sweeping the house, raising the dust, and keeping a great do only to find pins.

II. Pass we now to the second thing; which is to show how that *knowledge is the cause of sorrow, in respect of the laborious and troublesome acquisition of it.* For is there any labour comparable to that of the brain? any toil like a continual digging in the mines of knowledge? any pursuit so dubious and difficult as that of truth? any attempt so sublime as to give a reason of things?

When a man must be led a long trace from the effect up to a hidden, remote cause, and then back again, take a survey of the several virtues and active qualities of that cause, in its many and numerous effects.

Will an ordinary industry be able to break open those rarities that God and nature has locked up, and set out of the reach of a vulgar endeavour? How hard is it to draw a principle into all its consequences, and to unravel the mysterious fertility but of one proposition!

A man must be always engaged in difficult speculation, and endure all the inconveniencies that attend it; which indeed are more and greater than attend any other sort of life whatsoever.

The soldier, it is confessed, converses with dangers, and looks death in the face; but then he bleeds with honour, he grows pale gloriously, and dies with the same heat and fervour that gives life to others. But he does not, like the scholar, kill himself in cold blood; sit up and watch when there is no enemy; and, like a silly fly, buzz about his own candle till he has consumed himself.

Then again; the husbandman, who has the toil of sowing and

reaping, he has his reward in his very labour ; and the same corn that employs, also fills his hands. He who labours in the field indeed wearies, but then he also helps and preserves his body.

But study, it is a weariness without exercise, a laborious sitting still, that racks the inward, and destroys the outward man ; that sacrifices health to conceit, and clothes the soul with the spoils of the body ; and, like a stronger blast of lightning, not only melts the sword, but also consumes the scabbard.

Nature allows men a great freedom, and never gave an appetite but to be an instrument of enjoyment ; nor made a desire, but in order to the pleasure of its satisfaction. But he that will increase knowledge, must be content not to enjoy ; and not only to cut off the extravagancies of luxury, but also to deny the lawful demands of convenience, to forswear delight, and look upon pleasure as his mortal enemy.

He must call that study that is indeed confinement ; he must converse with solitude, walk, eat, and sleep thinking, read volumes, devour the choicest authors, and like Pharaoh's kine, after he has devoured all, look lean and meagre. He must be willing to be weak, sickly, and consumptive ; even to forget when he is a hungry, and to digest nothing but what he reads.

He must read much, and perhaps meet with little ; turn over much trash for one grain of truth ; study antiquity till he feels the effects of it ; and like the cock in the fable, seek pearls in a dung-hill, and perhaps rise to it as early. This is,

*Esse quod Arcesilas ærumnosique Solones :*

to be always wearing a meditating countenance, to ruminate, and talk to a man's self, for want of better company : in short, to do all those things, which in other men are counted madness, but in a scholar pass for his profession.

We may take a view of all those callings to which learning is necessary, and we shall find that labour and misery attends them all. And first for the study of physic : do not many lose their own health, while they are learning to restore it to others ? do not many shorten their days, and contract incurable diseases, in the midst of Galen and Hippocrates ? get consumptions amongst receipts and medicines, and die while they are conversing with remedies ?

Then for the law : are not many called to the grave, while they are preparing for a call to the bar ? Do they not grapple with knots and intricacies, perhaps not so soon dissolved as themselves ? Do not their bodies wither and decay, and, after a long study of the law, look like an estate that has passed through a long suit in law ?

But, above all, let the divine here challenge the greatest share ; who, if he takes one in ten in the profit, I am sure, may claim

name in ten in the labour. It is one part of his business indeed to prepare others for death ; but the toil of his function is like to make the first experiment upon himself.

People are apt to think this an easy work, and that to be a divine is nothing else but to wear black, to look severely, and to speak confidently for an hour ; but confidence and propriety is not all one ; and if we fix but upon this one part of his employment, as easy as it seems to be,

*Expertus multum sudes, multumque, labores.*

But the divine's office spreads itself into infinite other occasions of labour : and, in those that reach the utmost of so great a profession, it requires depth of knowledge, as well as heights of eloquence.

To sit and hear is easy, and to censure what we have heard much easier. But whatsoever his performance is, it inevitably puts us upon an act of religion ; if good, it invites us to a profitable hearing ; if otherwise, it inflicts a short penance, and gives an opportunity to the virtue of patience.

But, in sum, to demonstrate and set forth the divine's labour, I shall but add this, that he is the only person to whom the whole economy of Christianity gives no cessation, nor allows him so much as the sabbath for a day of rest.

III. And lastly, *knowledge increases sorrow, in respect of its effects and consequents* ; in three of which I shall give instance.

1. The first effect of the increase of knowledge, is an increase of the desire of knowledge. It is the covetousness of the understanding, the dropsy of the soul, that drinks itself athirst, and grows hungry with surfeit and satisfaction ; it is the only thing in which reason itself is irrational.

Now an endless desire does of necessity vex and torment the person that has it. For misery and vexation is properly nothing else but an eager appetite not satisfied.

He that is always a getting, is always looking upon himself as in want. And he that is perpetually desiring to know, is perpetually thinking of himself ignorant ; namely, in respect of those things that he desires to know.

In fine, happiness is fruition ; but there is no fruition where there is a constant desire. For enjoyment swallows up desire, and that which fulfils the expectation also ends it. But while desire is active and vigorous, and the mind still a craving and reaching at somewhat, it supposes our happiness to be at a distance ; for no man reaches after what he has already.

The bottomless appetite of knowledge will not be satisfied, and then we know that sorrow is the certain result and inseparable companion of dissatisfaction.

2. The second unhappy effect of knowledge is, that it rewards its followers with the miseries of poverty, and clothes them with rags. Reading of books consumes the body; and buying of them the estate.

The mind of man is a narrow thing, and cannot master several employments; it is wholly employed, whether in the pursuit of riches, or in the quest of learning, and no man grew either rich or learned merely by the diversion of his spare hours.

He therefore that buries his strength, his thoughts, his opportunities in a book, can he possibly be rich, unless Providence itself should trade for him, the exchange follow him, and the Indies travel to him? But certainly these would be vain expectations. The east now-a-days affords no such wise men, that will take a long journey only to make presents, and to give of their gold and their treasures.

Hence it is that the learned man and the philosopher *omnia sua secum portat*; he numbers no flocks, tells no acres of ground, has no variety or change of raiment, and is not solicitous which, but what he shall put on: he never aspires to any purchase, unless perhaps of some dead man's study; at the same time buying the relics of another's death, and the instruments of his own.

Hereupon he is put to the worst and the most discouraging of all miseries, which is, to be beholden and obliged. For what was Aristotle without his Alexander? Virgil without Augustus? Horace without Mæcenas? and other poets, like their own wreaths of ivy, they were always creeping about something for a support. A scholar without a patron is insignificant: he must have something to lean upon: he is like an unhappy cause, always depending.

We read of the prophet's accommodation and furniture in the house of the Shunamite, 2 Kings iv. 10, "A little chamber, a table, a stool, and a candlestick;" and perhaps, if he had lived there for any considerable time he would have been reckoned not so much one of the inhabitants, as part of the furniture of the house.

These are the happy effects of study and knowledge; and as most kinds of study hinder men from getting estates, so there are some that cannot be undertaken without an estate, nor long pursued without the loss of it. As for instance, he that follows chemistry must have riches to throw away upon the study of it; whatever he gets by it, those furnaces must be fed with gold. In short, I will not say, that the study of knowledge always finds men poor, but sure it is, that it is seldom or never but it leaves them so.

3. The third fatal effect of knowledge is, that it makes the person who has it the butt of envy, the mark of obloquy and contention. Whoever sees another more knowing than himself,

he presently thinks him a reproach to his understanding; and although he himself will not undergo the labour of knowledge, yet he will not allow another the fame.

Hence come all the jars between learned men, the invectives and bitter books, the wars of critics, and the controversies of the schools, all managed with such keenness and virulence, throwing dirt and disgorging daggers at one another's reputation; for no other injury in the world, but because the adverse party is thought to know more.

As Grotius, in one of his poems, speaking of knowledge, and the invidiousness of it, not inelegantly expresses it,

*Quàm nil sit illud quod vocamus his scire,  
Quo nos superbi tollimus caput cœlo,  
Calcamus alios, invicemque calcamur.*

To trample, and to be trampled upon, to write, and to be writ against, is the lot of the learned, the effect of learning, as it lies under the malign aspect of a constant emulation.

Now one would think that envy, which like fire aspires as well as consumes, and always soars and strikes high, should not prey upon a poor threadbare philosopher. Yet if a man ventures but out of the old road, and attempts to enlarge the borders of philosophy, by the introduction of some new method, or the discovery of some unheard-of invention, some new phenomena in nature, what a tragical outcry is presently raised against him, all the world pecking at him, and about his ears!

How are Gallileo and Copernicus persecuted, and Descartes worried by almost every pen! Dreadful are the censures thundered out against them, both from the press and the pulpit, especially by those puny, systematical theologues, whose philosophy never went beyond Keckerman, nor their divinity beyond Wollebius, and who would have all things new in the church, but nothing in the schools.

Thus must a man spend his fortune, consume his time, and rack his brain, and all to produce some birth that is like to be devoured as soon as born; to have his labours stifled or trod upon, his knowledge railed down, and his person exposed to the violence of those who are never witty but in their malice, nor extraordinary in any thing but ill behaviour.

And now, if this be our lot, what remains for us to determine upon? Is there no way to get out of this unhappy dilemma, but that we must needs either dash upon the sorrows of knowledge, or the baseness of ignorance? Why yes, there is a fair escape left us; for God has not placed mankind under a necessity either of sin or misery. And therefore, as to the matter in hand, it is only to continue our labour, but to alter the scene of it; and to make him, that is the great author, also the subject of our knowledge. For though there is a vanity, a sorrow, and dissatisfaction

tion in the knowledge of created, inferior objects, yet we are assured that "it is life eternal to know God, and whom he has sent, his Son Christ Jesus."

To which God, the fountain of all true wisdom and understanding, giving freely to those that ask, and upbraiding none, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.



## SERMON IX.

PRAYER ANSWERED ONLY WHEN OFFERED IN SINCERITY.

PSALM LXVI. 18.

*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*

THIS Psalm is David's grateful commemoration of all God's mercies, together with a retribution of praise, the only recompence and return that the poor sons of men are able to make for divine favours. And David, as standing in a double relation, first of a king and public parent, under which he did not only govern, but represent his people; and secondly, of a saint of God under which notion it was his business to regard the peculiar interest of his own soul; so accordingly he does proportion his praises to these two several conditions: first, as he was a public person and a king, he gives thanks to God for public mercies: for he whose duty it was to love his people as himself, it was also his duty to esteem all mercies shown to his people, at a second hand, shown to himself. And this he does from the first to the thirteenth verse; where he praises God in respect of the glory of his majesty and the greatness of his power, which he had often employed in the miraculous deliverance of his people, from the first verse to the eighth. And then for his mercy and faithfulness, not only in ridding them out of adversity, but, by seasonable afflictions, securing them from the greater danger of prosperity: and this he does from the eighth verse to the thirteenth. And secondly, as one of God's saints, so he takes a more especial thankful notice of the personal favours that God had conferred upon him: and this he does from the thirteenth verse to the end of the Psalm. Wherein, for the manner of the duty, we may observe, that it is praise. As prayer is an asking or craving, so praise is a giving and returning; therefore not only a spiritual, but a kingly work; and consequently most befitting David, who was in his days not only the most religious of men, but the best of kings. And it was that which gave him no less a pre-eminence above other saints, than his crown gave him prerogative over his people, that he was a man of praises, of all others the most frequent and earnest in this duty: which, in this sense excels prayer; inasmuch as gratitude is more laudable than a craving desire. It was David's best, his greatest and most lasting praise, that he made it his business to praise God. Secondly, for the matter of this praise; it was not things carnal, as the establishing his crown, and the enlarging his dominions, but it was spiri-

tual; as in the sixteenth verse, "I will declare what he has done for my soul."

Now in this acknowledgment of his we may observe, that the greatest argument of his praise was the sense of God's gracious hearing his prayer, as appears from the two last verses, where in the verse immediately foregoing, containing the words of my text, he insinuates the reason of the success of his prayers, by showing what would have hindered that success. He says, "If he had regarded iniquity in his heart, God would not have heard him;" therefore he implies, that his integrity, in not regarding it, was the reason that God did hear him. And thus I have given you the resolution and model of the whole Psalm, and therein the occasion of these words that I have read unto you, together with the connexion they have with the foregoing and following verses.

The words may be considered two ways:

1st. As they have a peculiar reference to David and his particular condition; and so they are a vehement asseveration of his integrity. We read the words thus; "If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me." But the Septuagint has it, *μη εισακουσάτω μου Θεός*; that is, "let not God hear me." And so they are David's avouchment of his uprightness, by an imprecation, or calling for a curse upon himself, namely, God's not hearing his prayers, in case he was not really so upright, as in words he did protest himself to be. Thus Job also testifies his integrity in Job xxxi. 7, 8, "If my steps have turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and any blot have cleaved to my hands; then let me sow, and let another eat." All this is an earnest protestation of Job's steadfast walking before God. And thus the words hold forth a testimony of David's uprightness; and, compared with the following verses, are not only a testimony, but a clear proof of it; and that in a perfect hypothetical syllogism. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me;" then it follows in the next verse, "But verily, God hath heard me;" and, adding the conclusion, "Therefore I do not regard iniquity in my heart." It amounts to a full argumentation, proving the sincerity of David's heart. Here we may note, as David does evince his integrity from the success of his prayers, as a sign and consequent of that integrity; so the hypocrite, or sinner, may invert the argument, and collect the future unsuccessfulness of all his prayers from his want of integrity; and that not only as a sign, but as the proper cause of that unsuccessfulness; in this manner, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me:" now the hypocrite must assume, "But I regard iniquity in my heart:" therefore he must also conclude, "God will not hear me;" he will have no respect unto my prayers. And thus much concerning the first consideration of the words.

2dly. The words may be considered absolutely in themselves,

and so applicable to all men. In this sense they are a positive direction laid down in negative terms, and prescribing the way of our sincere worship of God. For interpreters do generally agree, that although David in these words intends to attest his own integrity, yet he does also no less intend to give men a rule for the regulation of their holy worship. For, by telling us that God does not respect the prayers of those that regard iniquity in their hearts, he does intimate, that the acceptance of all our holy services before God is grounded upon the inward, hearty sincerity of our souls; and therefore it ought to be our duty, both in point of reverence to God, and wisdom for our own interest, never to engage in any holy performance without this sincerity, but especially in prayer, wherein men have the nearest address to God; and consequently upon their sincerity, may here chiefly expect a blessing, and, upon the want of it, fear a judgment. I shall consider the words in this latter general sense; and so deduce from them an observation, not much distinct from the words themselves; for only by resolving them, as they lie in supposition, into a positive assertion, they afford us this doctrine:

“Whosoever regards iniquity in his heart, the Lord will not hear him.”

Or yet more plainly.

A man's regarding or loving any sin in his heart, will certainly hinder his prayers from having any acceptance with God.

In the prosecution of this doctrine, I shall show,

I. What it is for a man to regard or love sin in his heart.

II. What it is to have our prayers accepted with God.

III. How regarding or loving sin in the heart, hinders a man's prayers from being thus accepted.

IV. Application.

I. Concerning the first: a man may be said several ways to love or regard sin in his heart.

1. There is a constant and habitual love of sin in the unregeneracy and corrupt estate of the soul. For a man, as considered in his pure, or rather his impure naturals, has not only a strong, but a universal love to sin. Sin was born, and lay in the same womb with every man; therefore he must needs love it as his brother. Now, as union is generally stated the effect of love, therefore, since the union between sin and our nature is so close, we may thence also collect that the love is very great. In this sense sin and the corruption thereof is styled “the flesh; not only by a metonymy of the subject for the adjunct, because sin has its place and residence in the flesh: but also for the tender love and affection that we bear to it; for, as the apostle says in Eph. v. 29, “No man hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it;” and withal, because we continually carry it about us. A man may as well go abroad,

and leave his body and his flesh behind him, as an unregenerate man go any whither not attended by his sin. It is called sometimes "the body of sin," and that deservedly, because it is so nearly united to the soul. The scripture has several expressions showing the cursed habitual love that a natural man bears to his sin. Sometimes it is called his "right eye," Matt. xviii. 9, than which nothing is more dear. God himself sometimes expresses the greatness of his love to his children in the same terms: he regards them as the "apple of his eye." To have one's eye continually upon any thing argues a great love of it; but to account it as the eye itself, shows a love more than ordinary. Elsewhere sin is called "our right hand," Mark ix. 43, the member of use and execution; and therefore, most carefully tendered by man, whose nature it is to be in continual action. How dear it is, the common expression demonstrates; we say of an extraordinary and beloved friend, he is our right hand. It is also placed and lodged in the heart, Jer. xvii. 9, which in every sinner, as it is the original of natural life, so it is the principle and fountain of spiritual death. Sin, it is the *primum vivens*, and the *ultimum moriens*; life the heart itself, which harbours it in every finally impenitent sinner: so exceedingly beloved, that many unregenerate men vouchsafe even to live and die with their sins; which is the highest pitch of love imaginable. Again, in Job xv. 16, the wicked is said to "drink iniquity like water." No appetite so strong as that of thirst. Hence, as it is the peculiar distinguishing property of the godly to thirst after righteousness, Matt. v. 6, so it is of the wicked to thirst after iniquity; who quenches his present desire of sin with the actual commission of it; as a man does his thirst, that is, both with vehemence and delight. It is proper only to the drunkard to make his drink his sin; but it is the nature of every carnal man (if you will admit of the expression) to account his sin as desirable as his drink. But that we may yet further see how a natural man loves, tenders, and regards his sin; there is nothing dear and lovely to us, but the Spirit of God expresses sin by that. What more to be prized than our eyes or hands? What can or ought to be more dear to us than our heart? more desired than our food, or more amiable than life? Yet sin, we see, engrosses all the affections that ought to be distributed amongst all these. This love is yet more evident from the service a carnal man does for his sin, who bears rule over him, from his own voluntary subjection. It is the nature of love, where it is excessive, to enslave a man to the commands of the party whom he loves: as Jacob did for Rachel, so a wicked man for his sin; he will serve many years for it, and they shall seem but a few days, because of the love he bears to it. What God and nature has bestowed on man, that, man has made a full and total resignation of to sin, to be commanded, used, and employed by

it: the understanding is busied to contrive iniquity; the senses to purvey and bring in provender for it, in the representation of sinful objects; the will to command and govern in the name of sin; the outward powers and members to execute those commands: so that the whole frame and structure of man is principled, and, as it were, even animated by sin; for, first, it has general rule and possession of all the faculties; and, secondly, of all the actions that flow from those faculties. And then, for the perpetuity and constant course of those actions, Gen. vi. 5, "they are sinful continually," and without any intermission. In short he that regards iniquity in his heart, in this habitual way, he so regards it as he neither does or can regard any thing else. For the force and activity of man's mind is a limited force; and as it is with our attention, so it is also with our love, it cannot be vehement and intense at the same time upon two different objects. Now, from what has been said, it follows, that in this manner a regenerate person cannot love or regard sin; and all unregenerate do.

2. There is a regarding of sin in the heart, that consists in an unmortified habit or course of sin; this is much different from the former, because even a child of God may thus regard sin, from the relics of corrupt nature, fired and stirred up by Satan's temptations; for the model of a regenerate state is, like that of the body, mixed and compounded of contrary principles, grace and corruption, as that is of contrary elements. And as the elements, in the composure of the body, have their qualities allayed and refracted; so these habits of grace and corruption, as they are in a regenerate soul, are not in their utmost degree and extremity. For if grace were in its full height and latitude, there could be no corruption; which is a bliss rather to be wished for, than ever enjoyed in this life. And, on the other hand, if corruption were in its full extent or degree, there could be no grace, and so no regeneration. For it is the nature of contraries, that one arising to its highest pitch, does, by consequence, expel and devour the other. Wherefore grace and corruption are joined and contempered in a believing soul, from which conjunction arises a possibility of the entertainment of sinful habits and dispositions, even in the regenerate, though not such as are found in the unregenerate: in the one they defile indeed and pollute; in the other, they prevail and domineer: in the one, they separate from the sense of God's love; in the other, they take away all interest in it. Now, that there may be such sinful dispositions or habits in believers may be evinced,

(1.) From example: when David had committed that gross sin of murder and adultery, if we compute the time of his sin to his repentance, which was dated from Nathan's coming to him, we shall find that he continued in it for the space of a year. Now we must know, every intense and vehement action leaves a suit-

able disposition behind it upon the faculty, which, if seconded by actions of the same kind, or not weakened and destroyed by actions of a contrary nature, it daily gathers strength, and gets root and fixation in the mind, till it at length becomes a sinful habit, very difficultly to be removed. So that David, after the commission of so great a sin, must needs have had a further inclination to it left upon his spirit, which, by reason also of the compliance it found with his natural corruption, daily grew more and more fixed; for, although he did not reiterate it by other external actions, yet by his internal desires and approbations he did increase and confirm it; for it cannot be imagined but that he entertained those approbations of it as long as he deferred his repentance. Hereupon he found the work of repentance so hard, and his sin so hardly moveable, when he set about the penitent removal of it: so that he cries, Psalm xxxviii. 5, "My wounds stink and are corrupt by reason of my foolishness." A wound immediately cured, soon after it was given, cannot stink or grow noisome. It is clear then, that David was not only guilty of sin, but also of continuance in sin; who, notwithstanding he was a son of God, and truly regenerate, yet had his heart overrun with a sinful habit and disposition.

(2.) It may be proved from scripture-reason, which is grounded upon those exhortations that are there made even to believers for the mortification of sin; as peculiarly, that, Rom. viii. 13, the apostle exhorts even those to mortify the deeds of the flesh, who were truly ingrafted into Christ; for they were such as, he said, in the first verse, "were justified;" such to whom there was "no condemnation:" also he bids them mortify sin "by the Spirit;" but the Spirit is to be found in none but the regenerate. Now to mortify sin, is not properly to forbear one or many sinful actions, but it is the weakening or destroying a course or habit of sin. Comparing therefore the nature of the duty with the qualification of the persons to whom it was enjoined, the apostle must seem to insinuate a possibility that even believers may be entangled and overtaken in a sinful course.

This therefore is the second kind of regarding sin in the heart; and the soul may thus love or regard sin two ways:

1st. Directly, and by a positive pursuance of it; as the following of one action by another; the backing of one sinful deed by a greater; when sin reigns by a cursed kind of succession; when one wicked action expires, another presently succeeds.

2dly. Indirectly, and by not attempting a vigorous mortification of it. In the former sense, we cherish sin by giving it food: in this second, by not taking that which it has away. Not to resist sin, and that by an indefatigable watching, striving, and praying against it, is to love it. He that does not attempt the utter ruin and death of it, does not hate it: for hatred, no less than love, is an active, restless quality, and cannot quiet itself,

but in the destruction of the thing it hates. Can there be hatred where there is agreement? Can we banish sin from our hearts, and yet hold it in our bosoms? He that is not against his sin, in a lively resistance, is for it in his affections. He that does not oppose the tempter, invites him. He that hinders not the occasion of his sin, tacitly wishes the event. *Qui non prohibet cum debet, imperat.* What mortification of sin is, in the nature, causes and means of it, is not my present business to discourse; but let it suffice to note thus much, that it is a steady, thorough course of repentance and severe humiliation: and he that does not, by a continual rigid exercise of these duties, by hacking at the root of sin, bears a secret longing to the fruit.

And thus much of this second kind of love to sin; which consists in the cherishing an unmortified lust.

3. There is yet another kind of regarding sin in the heart, and that is, by an actual intention of the mind upon sin; "If I regard iniquity:" the Latin renders it, *Si aspexissem iniquitatem*; if I did behold, if I cast a gracious aspect upon sin. True it is, that the most sincere, if they look upon their heart, must also look upon sin; but then they view it another way; the wicked look upon it with an eye of complacency and delight; the sincere, with an eye of hatred and detestation. The same sin, in a wicked and a godly eye, has a contrary hue; as the same colour, through different glasses, is conveyed under a different representation. Now, *to look upon*, signifies to be intent upon; the actions of the eye, by an easy metaphor, signifying the intention of the mind. Interpreters, in their expositions upon this place, unanimously run this way. *Si aspexissem iniquitatem*: that is *Si pravâ intentione illum deprecatus fuisset*, says one; *Aspicere iniquitatem est peccato intentum esse et addictum*; says another: or, as Mollerus has it, *Cum proposito perseverandi in delicto contra conscientiam*; to regard iniquity in our heart, is to address ourselves to God in prayer, with a purpose or intention of persevering in some sin, condemned and disallowed by our own conscience. And it is added, "in the heart," to show how little the outward duty avails, without inward uprightness. We may have clean hands, and yet a foul heart; that is, be free from the external commission of sin, yet defiled with the desires of it. We may regard it in our minds and intentions, while we declare against it in our professions; wherefore these ought chiefly to be rectified. Having thus shown that there are three several ways of loving or regarding sin, I conceive the words are to be understood principally in this last sense, though not exclusively to the former; for it implies and takes them in *à fortiori*. For if the actual intention of sin will hinder our prayers from being accepted, then much more a sinful disposition, or wicked course, as long as cherished and continued in: and if a sinful disposition

disannul our prayers, then much more a state of unregeneracy. We may look upon these three under this difference. The purpose or intention of sin differs from a sinful disposition in respect of the duration and continuance of it. It is confessed, a sinful intention may be improved into a sinful course; but, considered as such, it implies no more than a bare intention; and, if cast off by an immediate repentance it will be no more. Next, a sinful disposition differs from a state of unregeneracy, inasmuch as the precise nature of it neither implies prevalence, nor a graceless condition of the party in whom it is, both of which are absolutely implied in the other.

I have now done with the first general head, viz. to show what it is to regard iniquity in the heart. I proceed to

II. The second, which is to show, *what it is to have our prayers accepted with God*: and this is to prevail with God for the obtaining the good thing we desire, by virtue of an interest in Jesus Christ, and in the covenant of grace; this is clear, from that general received truth, that the acceptance of our prayers is founded upon the acceptance of our persons; and this, we know is from an interest in Christ: hereupon Christ teaches his disciples the way of making their prayers successful; John xvi. 24, "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it you;" that is, what ye ask, upon the score of that title and interest that you have in my merits. If it here be excepted, that although he indeed prescribes asking in his name, as a means of having our prayers granted, yet he does not exclude other means: I answer; that by commanding us so frequently to ask in his name, he does imply, that there is no other way of asking aright, so as to speed in the things we request; for if there was some other way, this exhortation were of little or no force. Hence, in Rev. viii. 3, we read of incense that was mingled and offered with the prayers of the saints; by which incense is meant the sweet savour of the meritorious sufferings of Christ, which alone was able to give virtue and value to those prayers, which of themselves had none. And thus, by showing what it is to have our prayers accepted, by the same is also manifest, who they are who have their prayers thus accepted; namely, those alone who have a portion in him; who can not only ask of his Father, but also demand an answer for them; who can take what comes from our polluted lips, and perfume it with the incense of his own merits. I shall further assert and prove this truth, by removing some objections, which will naturally arise from what has been already said.

*Objection.* If the acceptance of our prayers bears upon the foundation of our interest in Christ, whence then is it that God hears the prayers of the wicked, who are void of all such interest? as particularly appears in Ahab, a sinner of the first mag-



nitude, no where mentioned in scripture but with some distinguishing mark of impiety; yet, upon the intervention of his prayer and humiliation, God repeals a judgment denounced against him, and, from his own days, translates it to his son. I answer: that God, indeed, often seconds the prayers of the wicked with a blessing; but he does not give the blessing with any respect to their prayers, as the procuring cause of that blessing. But it may be replied; that neither are the prayers of the righteous any way a meritorious and procuring cause of any good thing from God; since the most exact of our endeavours are tainted with imperfection: so that, after all, we have cause to sit down as unprofitable servants. I answer; that the prayers of the righteous are not the procuring cause of any blessing, by virtue of any inherent merit in them; but by virtue of the free covenant and promise of God, who has engaged, upon the fervent and unfeigned prayers of the faithful, to grant their requests. But if it be further urged, that God says, "Because Ahab humbled himself, I will not bring the evil threatened in his days," 1 Kings xxi. 29, therefore it seems that Ahab's prayer had a casual influence as to the procurement of that merciful reprieve: to this I answer, that such expressions as signify casuality, are often applied to those things that are only occasions of such events. And so it is here: Ahab's humiliation was noways a procuring cause of that mercy; neither by any meritorious virtue residing in it, for the prayers of the wicked merit nothing but a denial; nor yet by any virtue that it has from any covenant made by God, who is so far from making any promise of hearing the prayers of the wicked, that he has expressly promised that he will not hear them. It was therefore only an occasion of this mercy, that is, the mercy so depended upon it, as if that humiliation had not been, he had never enjoyed the mercy; however, it was no cause of the mercy, neither deserving nor procuring. As for instance; if a rich man engage to relieve some beggars, upon their coming to his door and asking; although this their beggarly address has no value in it to merit a reward, yet, by virtue of the rich man's promise and engagement, they may challenge it; now if he give the like alms to other beggars, to whom he had made no such promises, only upon their importunity; this their importunity does here neither deserve, nor can challenge an alms; yet it may be said properly to occasion it, inasmuch as, if it had not been for this, they had gone without it. And thus, I think, it is clear, that God may bestow upon the wicked the matter they pray for, and yet not hear their prayers; that he may grant them, and yet never accept them. And let me add another thing, that discriminates the prayers of the wicked from those of the faithful; that although God often gives them the thing they desired, yet he never gives it with an intent of mercy. Thus he gave the Israelites quails, but withal sent leanness into

their souls. He so gives the thing, as he still withholds the blessing. When we are importuned by any one for something against our will, we at length cast it to him with anger; so I may say, God, being wearied with the restless, importunate cravings of a sinner, does not so much give, as rather angrily throw an outward blessing at him, whose very prayer is a sin; for what is it but a kind of extortion towards God himself. What we usually say amongst ourselves in ceremony, that is here verified in respect of God; that in all his bounty, not so much the substance of the gift, as the mind of the giver, is to be valued and regarded: yea, as God may, and often does deny some of the prayers of the righteous, out of love and mercy; so, out of anger and judgment, he grants the prayers of the wicked: whose very petitions are oftentimes their severest indictment; and their most devout requests may be interpreted into an imprecation.

It may be objected, if those that are in a state of sin regard iniquity in their heart, how then is it possible to get out of that estate? for how can they do it but by addressing themselves to God? and how can they address themselves unto God but by prayer? and we have already shown, that the condition they are in renders their prayers ineffectual.

To this I answer; that in their first serious resolution and purpose to turn to God, they pass from the state of sinners into the state of the penitent, and are such in God's account; and so consequently, there is a change of their condition. For although it cannot be said, that they have repented, yet they are then repenting: though, like the prodigal, they are not come home to their heavenly Father, yet they are upon their journey. We must know repentance has several acceptations: it may be either taken for the change and alteration of the corrupt qualities of our nature, and so it is the same with sanctification, and follows faith, as the effect does its cause; and in this sense a wicked man, in his present estate, is not immediately capable of repentance. Secondly, repentance may be taken for a sincere alteration of a man's sinful purposes and intentions; and so it precedes faith, and a wicked man ought and may repent; it is a duty immediately incumbent upon him in order to his salvation. Although, when I say a wicked man may repent, and thereupon his prayers be acceptable to God; we must distinguish between the instant immediately going before his repentance, in respect of which only he is to be termed wicked, and the instant of his repentance, in respect of which he is become another man. In the same sense, therefore, that the wicked may be said to repent, they may be said to have their prayers and services accepted; that is, the wicked antecedently so taken, and (as they speak, *in sensu deviso*) to wit, before the instant of their repentance, not concomitantly, and *in sensu composito*; the wicked as such, and

while he is such, can neither repent nor pray, nor have any audience or acceptance at the throne of grace.

And thus much concerning the second general head, viz. to show what it is to have our prayers accepted with God. I proceed now to

III. The third thing, to show *whence it is that a man's regarding or loving sin in his heart hinders his prayers from acceptance with God.*

1. The first reason is, because in this case he cannot pray by the Spirit. All prayers that are acceptable with God are the breathings of his own Spirit within us. Rom. viii. 26, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with sighs and groans that cannot be uttered." As without the intercession of Christ we cannot have our prayers accepted, so without the intercession of the Spirit we cannot pray. No prayers can find the way to heaven, but such as first come from thence. Every sincere prayer, it is a beam of the sun of righteousness darted into our hearts, and from thence reflecting back again. But now, as long as sin and the love of it have dominion in the soul, the Spirit of God is silent; for as prevailing corruption and the Spirit cannot cohabit together, so neither can they work together. The motions of sin and of the Spirit often struggle in the same heart, as Pharez and Zarah did in the same womb, in Gen. xxxviii. 29; the motions of the Spirit put forth their hand, but those of sin prevailing, they drew it back again, and sin comes out first. Wherefore, if any one bears a love and liking to sin, let him never expect to have his prayer accepted, till sin and the Spirit concur in the same petition.

2. The second reason is, because as long as a man regards iniquity in his heart, he cannot pray in faith; that is, he cannot build a rational confidence upon any promise that God will accept him. Now faith always respects the promise, and promise of acceptance is made only to the upright: so long, therefore, as men cherish a love of sin in their heart, they either understand not the promises, and so they pray without understanding; or they understand them, and yet misapply them to themselves, and so they pray in presumption: in either case they have little cause to hope for acceptance. This reason naturally issues from the former; for whosoever prays not in the Spirit prays not in faith; and every prayer made in faith is also indited by the Spirit, only with this distinction, that in every such prayer the Spirit is the principal agent, and faith the instrumental. Here we may observe, that faith may be either taken for the habit and seed of faith, or for the act and exercise of that habit. Now the unregenerate man has not so much as the habit or principle of faith, and so upon no hand can have his prayers accepted; and he that

is truly regenerate, and endued with this principle, yet while he is entangled with the love of sin, cannot act nor exercise that principle, and so neither can his prayers be acceptable. Faith causes the soul fiducially and strongly to rely and cast itself upon God in prayer: love to sin causes the soul to depart and fly off from God. Faith clears up the evidence of our title to the promises; love to sin (although we have a title to the promises by conversion) yet it slurs and takes away the evidence; and when this is gone, we cannot pray with any life and vigour. But to manifest further the nature of a wicked man's prayer not acted by faith, see Rom. xiv. 23, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." No wonder, therefore, if that which is sin, and so consequently deserves a curse, cannot prevail for the obtaining a blessing.

*Objection.* But it may be objected, if, during the time of our regard and love to integrity, our prayers (as not proceeding from faith) are sins, then it is our duty not to pray, since it is the duty of all men to forbear sin.

I answer; That this consequence is very unreasonable, inasmuch as omission of prayer is of its own nature a sin, and that a greater. And for that maxim that it is the duty of all to forbear sin, it is to be understood of those actions that in their own kind and nature are sins, not of those that are such by accident, and the defect of some circumstance; in which case the defect is to be amended, and not the action to be omitted. Now prayer of itself and in its nature is good, and becomes sinful only from some adherent corruption which derives a tincture and defilement upon it; wherefore it ought to be our business to endeavour the removal of this corruption, which weakens, pollutes, and defiles our prayers, and not to cease from prayer itself. And thus much for the second reason.

3. The third reason is, because while we regard iniquity in our hearts we cannot pray with fervency; which, next to sincerity, is the great qualification of prayer, to which God has annexed a promise of acceptance, Matt. xi. 12, "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent alone take it by force;" Matt. vii. 7, those only that seek are like to find, and those that knock, to have admittance; all which expressions denote vehemence and importunity. Now the cause of vehemence, in our prosecution of any good, is our love of it; for proportionable to the affection we bear to any thing is the earnestness of our desires, and the diligence of our pursuit after it. So long therefore as the love of sin possesses our hearts, our love to spiritual things is dull, heavy, inactive, and our prayers for them must needs be answerable. O the wretched fallacy that the soul will here put upon itself! At the same time it will love its sin and pray against it; at the same time it will entreat for grace, with a desire not to prevail: as a father confesses of himself, that before his conversion he would pray for chastity, with a secret

reserve in his wishes, that God would not grant his prayer. Such are the mysterious, intricate treacheries, by which the love of sin will make a soul deceive and circumvent itself. How languidly and faintly will it pray for spiritual mercies, conscience in the mean while giving the lie to every such petition! The soul, in this case, cannot pray against sin in earnest; it fights against it, but neither with hope nor intent to conquer; as lovers, usually, in a game one against another, with a desire to lose. So then, while we regard iniquity, how is it possible for us to regard spiritual things, the only lawful object of our prayers? and, if we regard them not, how can we be urgent with God for the giving of them? And where there is no fervency on our part, no wonder if there is no answer on God's.

And thus much concerning the reasons, why love to sin hinders the acceptance of our prayers; they would both admit and deserve a larger handling; but

IV. I pass to the *application*: which shall be only a use of exhortation to all, that in their prayers they would endeavour to come with hearts free from hypocrisy, and the love of sin; and, from what has been said, make that conclusion that Paul did in 2 Tim. ii. 19, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ" (especially in prayer) "depart from iniquity." The prayer will still savour of that which lies in the heart; as the putrefaction of the inward parts give a noisomeness to the breath. God, that would not let David, because he had made great wars and shed much blood, build him a temple; if thou carriest blood and revenge in thy heart, will not let thee worship in his temple. It was an excellent speech that Homer puts in the mouth of Hector, in the sixth Iliad; and spoken by a Christian to the true God, from a principle of faith, might savour of good divinity. When he comes from the fight, and being entreated by his mother to sacrifice to the gods; "No," says he;

Χερσὶ δ' ἀνίπτουσι Διὶ λείβειν αἷθοπα οἶνον  
 Ἄζομαι· οὐδὲ πη ἐστὶ κελαίνεφεί Κρονίωνι  
 Αἷμασι καὶ λύθρῳ τεπαλαγμένον εὐχετάσθαι.

"I dread to sacrifice to the gods with unwashed hands;" how much more should the Christian to the true God, with an unwashed heart; "for," says he, "it is not decent or fitting for a warrior, besmeared with blood and dirt, to present his supplication to God." God has declared himself a jealous God, and will be worshipped in truth: but, as long as we have holiness in our tongue, and sin in our heart, we worship him with a lie: and let none think, as Jacob did from his father, so from God also, to extort a blessing with a lie. He that under the law, for the most part, was worshipped with the offering of lambs, will, in the gospel-worship, dispense with our bringing them, so we bring their innocence.

To press this duty of sincerity in our worship, we may take these two motives :

1st Motive. By praying to God with insincere, sin-regarding hearts, we incur the certain frustration of all our prayers. And sure, to rational men, that propose to themselves an end in all their actions, it should be some trouble to make long prayers, and to be answered with nothing but disappointment : to offer a sacrifice, like Cain, and for God to have no respect to their sacrifice : *Magno conatu nihil agere* ; in much labour and pains to traffic with heaven for a nothing. This is the end of all hypocritical prayers ; they are only empty words, and accordingly they vanish into wind.

2nd Motive. In such prayers we are not only certain not to gain a blessing, but also we incur the danger of a heavy curse. He that comes to the wedding without a wedding-garment, is not only like to miss of the feast, but also to be cast into a prison. If the leprosy of sin cleaves to thy head, God has forbid thee to enter the congregation. If lust lies burning in thy heart, if pride lies swelling in thy bosom, beware and stand off ; God has commanded, if any such beast dare approach his holy mountain, that he should be struck through. And he will certainly do it ; for he has made ready the sword and arrows of his vengeance for the same purpose. Jacob's argument to his mother was good, that if his father should discern his fraud, he should not only not gain a blessing, but also bring a curse upon himself, Gen. xxvii. 12. So when a hypocrite makes his false, yet specious addresses to his heavenly Father for a blessing, God may say to him, Thy voice, indeed, is the voice of a holy Jacob, but thy heart is the heart of a profane Esau ; and accordingly he will curse him, and he shall be cursed. And no wonder ; for to engage in prayer while the heart goes a whoring after sin, what is it else, but to delude and mock the great God ? And God has said, that he will not be mocked ; he will not endure to have a hypocrite come and affront him to his face : if we pray only in a mockery, God will curse and punish in earnest. If the heart be torn from the body, it becomes a dead body ; and the heart, separated from the prayer, makes a dead prayer : and we know, as our Saviour says, " God is not a God of the dead, but of the living." Better one sigh and broken expression, with sincerity, than the most long, accurate, and elaborate prayer, with hypocrisy. *Gratior est qui deorum delubris, puram castamque mentem, quam qui meditatum carmen intulerit.* A man that is in conspiracy against his king, and knows that his king understands his conspiracy, would he dare come and present with a petition ? He that is in love and league with sin, is a traitor and conspirator against God ; and had he the same dread of him that he has of an earthly prince, he would know that in such a case it is death to come into his presence. When some formal hypocrites set upon this duty, with their eyes turned

up, and some forced tears, not having their hearts at all affected with the sense of that which they pretend to ; if we consider the vileness of the affront, and the infinite majesty of God that is so affronted, it is an argument of his inconceivable mercy and forbearance, that such are not struck dead in the place.

But to direct us how to pray with sincerity, I shall only give this rule : before you enter upon prayer, endeavour to prepare your hearts by a thorough and a strict examination. This, if any thing, will clear the coast. Sift yourselves by examining, as Satan does by tempting. Search and shake every corner of your heart. Ransack every passage of your life. Believe it, if any one unmortified lust, one cursed action lies undiscerned, it will trouble the peace of the whole soul. Whosoever therefore is conscious to himself of any regard or love that he bears to his iniquity, and shall yet venture to make an offering of prayer to God ; let such a one "leave his gift upon the altar, and go and reconcile himself" to God, in the blood of Jesus Christ ; and first sacrifice his sin, and then come and offer, and the sacrifice of his prayer shall be accepted.

To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

## SERMON X.

ALL THINGS KNOWN TO GOD.

1 JOHN III. 20.

*God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*

GOD, the creator of all things, an object fitter for our adoration, than our curious, but yet weak inquiries, is infinite in his being, and so consequently not to be comprehended by our finite understandings: yet since he is pleased to command us to worship him, which we cannot rationally do, unless in some measure we know him; he is therefore also pleased to aid our weak conceptions, by several expressions of himself, which we call attributes; as, that he is just, wise, merciful, and the like; all which, according to the common notions that men have of justice, wisdom, and mercy, are not strictly and properly to be found in God; so that, indeed, these words, as by us applied to him, rather testify our reverential desires of honouring him, than at all express his nature. For our words expressing only those ideas and images of things in the mind, all which were conveyed thither through the senses, it is impossible they should properly express the nature of God, which was never comprehended by the short reach of our senses; and therefore they could not report any representation of him to the mind, which might afterwards be expressed in words. And thus, by natural ratiocination, I gather that these words, just, righteous, and merciful, do not indeed exactly signify the nature and being of God. It is the prerogative of his essence not only to surpass the ken of sense, but also to nonplus the most accurate and sagacious discourses of reason. He laughs at the bold and laborious attempts of our understandings, in comprehending him: and, by his excessive brightness, wards off the eyes of the beholder, and (as we may say, by a seeming contradiction, but a real truth) is like the sun, too visible to be seen. And shall we then, poor mortals, think ourselves able to express what we are not so much as able to conceive? And if our thoughts take in a larger compass and latitude than our expressions, (for who is it that cannot think more than he speaks?) then, certainly, if we cannot reach his essence by our most elevated thoughts, much less can we do it by our words. But the same is further demonstrable from the difference of righteousness, mercy, and power, properly so called, from any thing that is in God. For these are all qualities inherent in the soul



of man, by virtue whereof he is enabled to act. For the soul being unable of itself, and by its bare substance, to advance into action, there are requisite therefore these certain qualities, by the instrumental mediation of which, it may exert its several operations. So that the soul, without its respective faculties and qualities to act by, is like an artificer without his tools: but now it is far otherwise with almighty God in his workings, whose actions immediately stream from his essence, without the auxiliary intervention of any being distinct from himself. Whereupon it must be granted, that these things, justice, mercy, &c., exist not of themselves, but as they are shouldered and propped up by the subject in which they are; and therefore are imperfect beings, and so not properly to be found in God, whose very nature it is to be perfect. And furthermore, as they are always distinct from the essence in which they are, we thence also collect that they are not in God, who is an indivisible, absolute, and uncompounded being, in whom there is nothing to be found but what is really himself.

But it may be said, If these things are so, that righteousness, justice, and mercy are not really and properly in God, whence is it that the scripture so often attributes these things to him? I answer, in this, as in many other things, it speaks according to the manner of men. In the same sense it attributes hands, eyes, and ears to God, not really, but metaphorically; that by the things we see, we may in some measure apprehend him that is invisible. In short, therefore, righteousness, justice, and mercy, are attributed, not according to the reality of the things themselves, but by the analogy of their effects. The meaning is this: God is called merciful, because some of his actions bear a proportion to those that men exercise from a principle of mercy; and powerful, because some of his actions have a similitude to those that men exercise from a principle of power: and so of the rest. Some say the like of his decrees; who affirm, that God can no more properly be said to decree a thing, than to fore-know it, to whom all things are present. Now, according to the sense of these men, God is said to decree, because some of his actions have a likeness to such actions as men produce under a decree or resolution. But I forbear, since I am afraid that I have gone too far in these notions already. But being, in my subsequent discourse, to insist upon one of the attributes of God, I thought it convenient to premise something of them in general.

We find mention of them all in scripture, and peculiarly the words which I have at present read to you, clearly hold forth his omniscience, or infinite knowledge. The words are plain and need no explication; therefore I shall forthwith draw this doctrine from them, not much different from the words themselves, viz.

That God is an all-knowing God.

This may seem a principle, and therefore not to be doubted, and consequently needless to be proved. But he that has looked into controversy, and especially those two which are now the most considerable, the Arminian and Socinian, will find that their grand fallacy, their *πρῶτον ψεύδος*, is founded upon their erroneous stinting of God's knowledge; but the first of these especially, who affirm, that God's knowledge, in respect of contingent futures, is only conditional, that is, God does not absolutely foreknow that such things will come to pass; but upon supposal that such and such causes meet with such and such circumstances, then he knows such things will follow: but now, if God does not absolutely and certainly know every contingent future, it follows, that he does not absolutely will and decree it; for whatsoever he wills he also knows; and if God does not will the future existence of it, whence comes it to exist? Certainly not from God, but from itself; for if God hereafter vouchsafes a productive influence to the actual producing of a thing contingent, which we now suppose future (which God must do, or cease to be the first cause of all things): I say, if God vouchsafes his power to give it existence, it follows, that he wills the production and existence of it at that time; for God wills a thing before he does it: and it also follows, that if he wills it at that time, he always willed and decreed it before; for to affirm that God wills the existence of a thing contingent, then in the producing of it, which before, while it was yet future, he did not will or decree; this is to make a new act of willing, which is an immanent act, and therefore not distinct from God, to begin in time; that is, to make something that is the same with God to be in God now, which was not in him before: which is hugely absurd, if not blasphemous. Thus we see the denial of God's absolute certain foreknowledge of all things makes the existence of many of them entirely independent upon God, and totally from themselves; which is indeed to make him an idle epicurean God, and to deify them. And herein lies the abomination of asserting God's knowledge in respect of any thing conditional. As for the next opinion, Socinus endeavouring to assert the freedom of man's will in the highest, and observing that God's absolute certain foreknowledge did lay an antecedent necessity upon all men's actions as to their event, he makes short and thorough work, and utterly denies his prescience. *Animadvertendum est infallibilem istam Dei prænotionem, quam pro re concessâ adversarii sumunt, à nobis non admitti*, Socin. Prælect. cap. viii. And that he might not seem to blaspheme without some reason, he says, as God, though he is omnipotent, cannot yet do those things that imply a contradiction; so, though he is omniscient, he cannot know things, the knowledge of which implies the same absurdity; which, he says, will follow in asserting that God has a certain infallible knowledge of those things which in themselves are un-

certain and contingent. And thus we see, that although God's omniscience be indeed a principle, and therefore ought to be granted; yet since it is thus controverted and denied, it is no less needful to be proved.

In the prosecution of this, I shall,

I. Prove the proposition, and that both by scripture and reason.

II. I shall show the excellency of this knowledge of God, beyond the knowledge of men or angels.

III. From the consideration of that excellency, I shall deduce something by way of inference and application.

I. And first for *the proof of it*, and that from scripture. In John **xxi.** 17, Peter says to Christ, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Divines do here generally acknowledge, that in these words Peter makes a confession of the deity of Christ, which could not be inferred, unless there was a necessary connexion between the divine nature and the power of knowing all things; for in this consists the strength of Peter's argument, proving Christ to be God; in this he ascribes a property to him that agrees only to God: as Christ elsewhere proves himself to be really a man, by assuming those properties to himself which are inseparably inherent in man's nature. Another scripture proving the same truth, is that of Heb. **iv.** 13, "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do;" that is, by a mataphor, to his understanding, which, by reason of the quickness and spirituality of this sense, is often expressed by *an eye*, and knowing by *seeing*: so that the words import thus much, that God most clearly discerns and knows all things and actions, as the eye manifestly beholds those objects that are fully presented to its view. There are many other places in scripture that richly hold forth God's omniscience, but in a point so evident these two may suffice.

Our second proof is from reason; and here our first argument shall be drawn from his works of creation and providence. It is impossible that he that made all things should not also know all things. Who is it that cannot readily acknowledge and read his own hand? What artificer is there that does not presently know and distinguish his own work? In all rational agents, before every action there is presupposed a knowledge of the thing that is to be produced by that action. So that if we grant (as I suppose none denies) that God is the maker of all things, that every creature dropped into the world through his hands, we cannot be so absurd as to deny him a distinct knowledge of those things, which with his own finger he made and fashioned. Next, his providence sufficiently declares his omniscience; if he manages, rules, and governs all things, yea sin itself, sometimes by permitting, sometimes by limiting or preventing, other times by punishing

it, it clearly follows, that he has full cognizance of those things, since all these acts presuppose knowledge.

Now, from the consideration of this attribute, since it is our duty to be like our heavenly Father, let us endeavour also to resemble him in knowledge. As it is the perfection of God to know all things, so it is the excellency of man to know any thing aright. Ignorance, it is the dishonour of our nature; and he that continues in it, what does he but erect a certain kingdom of darkness in his soul? But of all knowledge, that is the most excellent upon which depends our eternal interest: I mean, our knowledge of God in Christ. In comparison of which, God gives a very slight character of all things besides. What more desirable in the eyes of the world than riches? What more excellent than strength, more to be admired than wisdom? Yet what says God of all these, Jer. ix. 23, 24, "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, that exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth." So that this is a knowledge that does not only surpass strength and riches, before which the very heathens could prefer their poor knowledge of nature; but it is such a knowledge, in comparison of which the very wisdom of men is folly. Consider also, that this is the sure way to everlasting life; so sure, that in scripture it is called everlasting life itself, in John xvii. 3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Observe likewise, as this knowledge is called eternal life, so, on the contrary, the Spirit of God calls ignorance eternal death, John iii. 19, "And this is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light." Now if there can be any greater argument to a rational soul, to pursue after this knowledge, than the obtaining eternal life, let that soul neglect it; and on the other hand, if there can be any stronger motive to woo a man out of his ignorance, than avoiding damnation, let him hug his ignorance as a desirable thing; let him embrace a cloud, and refresh himself under the shadow of death. But consider this, you that are ignorant of God, ignorant in the midst of teaching ordinances. O how dreadful is it, to enjoy precious means of knowledge, and only to be proficient in ignorance! As long as thou art destitute of this spiritual light and knowledge, thou art to the devil as Samson to the Philistines without his eyes, thou must go whither he will lead thee, grind in his mill, and undergo all the slavish drudgery of sin, that a malicious devil, that hates thy soul, can put thee to. But on the other side, knowledge, as it makes thee in a true sense a man, so this saving knowledge of God makes thee more than a man, that is, a Christian. And

remember, as the preposterous desire of knowledge was the first cause of man's unhappy fall, so the pursuit of this spiritual knowledge must be the first occasion of his recovery.

Thus far the arguments by which we prove God's omniscience ; pass we now to

II. The second thing, which is *to show the excellency of God's knowledge, above the knowledge either of men or angels.* And this appears, 1. From the properties of this knowledge ; 2. From the object.

1. Concerning its properties. The first property holding forth the excellency of this knowledge, is the exceeding evidence, and consequently the certainty of it ; for though a thing may be certain, and yet not evident, yet whatsoever is evident, that also is certain. Evidence brings a property emanent from the essence and being of knowledge ; it follows, that that which includes the nature of knowledge in an infinite manner, must be also attended by a most infinitely clear evidence. He that causes that innate evidence in every object, by which it moves and strikes the faculty, shall not he see ? He that gives light to the eye, by which that evidence is discerned, shall not he discern ? The great *intellectus agens*, that by shining upon our understandings causes us to understand, shall not he himself understand much more clearly ? John i. 9, it is said of Christ, in respect of his deity, that "he is the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." It is elsewhere said of God, that he is "the Father of lights." Indeed, the knowledge of man, upon the greatest improvements, retains a great mixture of ignorance, and all his labour, all the travail of his soul, in the pursuit of science, is not able thoroughly to work out that darkness of mind which he brought with him into the world ; but now God is not only light, but such a light as with him there is no darkness at all. And thus it is clear, that the best of human knowledge is not able to contest with the divine. But yet may not the angels, those sons of light and knowledge, those near resemblances of their Creator, may not they at least vie with the divine knowledge ? Why, no. For even the angels stoop down and pry into the mysteries of God, and particularly that of the incarnation, as it is in 1 Pet. i. 12. Therefore they do not fully and evidentially know them, for these are the postures, not of those that know already, but of those that endeavour to know. But now God must needs know this great mystery, for he contrived it. In Job iv. 18, he is said to charge his angels with folly." Certainly then he must have a transcendently perfect wisdom, far excelling theirs. From hence, therefore, we see, that the knowledge of God, even as to its clearness and pregnant evidence, is inconceivably beyond the knowledge of men or angels.

2. Another property of this knowledge, showing the excellence

of it is this, that it is a knowledge independent upon the existence of the object or thing known. Man indeed receives nothing into his understanding but through his senses; and sense has nothing but what it fetches from the object. Take away sounds, and there will be no hearing; deprive us of light, and there will be no seeing. But now God beholds all things in himself; and that both eminently, as he sees his own perfection, which eminently includes all the perfection that is scattered among the creatures, as the light of all the stars is contained eminently in the sun; and he beholds them also formally, distinctly, and according to the model of their own proper beings, without looking upon the existence of the things themselves, and that two ways:

1st. By reflecting upon his power, and what he can do, he has a perfect knowledge of all possibilities, and of things that may be produced.

2dly. By reflecting upon his power and his will, he knows whatsoever shall be actually produced. For upon the concurrence of God's will with his power, there is nothing else requisite, but the thing does immediately result. This is the constitutive knowledge which gives being to the thing known; in which sense it may be truly said, that God does not therefore know things because they are or may be, but they therefore are or may be because he knows them. So that this our maxim, *Non entis nulla est scientia*, is true only of finite knowledge. For God's knowledge is antecedent to the object, quite different from ours, which is borrowed from it, and so subsequent to it. As the knowledge that a builder has of a house depends not upon the actual being of it; but he knows it partly by reflecting on his skill, in which he sees a perfect idea of it before ever it is made; and partly on his power, by which he is able to make it: but now others' knowledge depends upon the actual being of the house, as flowing from those representations they have of it after it is built. And such is our knowledge in respect of God's.

2. The excellency of God's knowledge appears in respect of his objects; which are all things knowable. But they may be reduced to three things especially, which God alone perfectly knows, and are not to be known by men or angels.

(1.) The nature of God himself. Nothing but an infinite knowledge can comprehend an infinite being. We may as well endeavour to take up the ocean in the hollow of our hands, or to clasp the heavens in our arms, as to understand or fathom the immense perfections of the divine nature.

(2.) The second sort of things only known to God are things future, and these are only within his reach. As for us, setting aside what we know by history, which is not so properly knowledge as belief, we know only what is present; for although we

know some things that are past also, yet we first know them as they were present; and the reason is, because we know things by our coexistence with them. Now God, by reason of the infinite compass of his being, running through all the distinctions of time by an intimate coexistence with them, and consequently with all things that do exist in those several and successive parcels of time, he takes a full survey of things, both past, present, and to come; which, though it be an undenied principle both in Christian and natural theology, and consequently to be rather granted as a self-evident truth, than disputed as a problem, yet he who shall look into the writings of the Pelagians, Jesuits, or their Dutch brood, the Remonstrants, will find that their grand fallacy, their *πρωτον ψευδος*, is founded upon their erroneous stating of the divine knowledge; by which they affirm, that God's knowledge, in respect of future contingents, is wholly conditional. For, as by one simple act of his being he does coexist with all successive durations, so, by one act of his understanding, he does also know them. To help our apprehensions in this thing, we may take this similitude: a man walking in a path sees not that part of the way that is behind him, neither that which is any great distance before him, but successively comes to see it, as by degrees he arrives to, and coexists with it: but now he that is upon a high mountain or tower, by one single cast of his eye, takes a view of the whole path, and at once sees the man, and what is behind him, and what so remote before him. Just so man, who exists in some part of time, neither properly knows those things that were before he was, nor those things that are future, but as he gains a successive coexistence with them. But God being, as I may say, exalted upon his own essence, does from thence, as from a high and lofty place, by one single act of his understanding, take a survey of us that are in the world, and those things that are past and behind us, together with those that are before us, and yet to come.

Now these things are of two sorts:

1st. Such as depend upon necessary causes, that is, those that constantly and in the same manner produce their effects: such are the sun and moon, in respect of the eclipses; and the heavens, in respect of many things here below. So that their effects, though future, may yet be known in the causes. For we can foretell an eclipse many years before: and while it is yet winter, we know that within such a period of days it will be summer. Now, in respect even of these future things, the knowledge of God, and of the creature, is very different: God, indeed, certainly knows when they will come to pass. Men and angels, indeed, have also a certain knowledge of them; but it is not absolute, but only suppositional: that is, upon supposal that such and such things continue in their being, and that God withal affords them his ordinary concurrence, such and such effects will

certainly follow. But the causes themselves may perish; and God, that created nature, may, by the same power and sovereignty, interrupt it in its course; as he did the sun, in the time of Joshua, Josh. x. 13, and the operation of that fire upon the three children. Now in this case, neither men nor angels can certainly know or determine of such futures.

2dly. The second sort of things future are things in their nature occasional and contingent; such as come by chance, and such as depend upon the free will of man; which is various in its working, and consequently, that which is produced by it must needs be uncertain in the event. Now, it is the prerogative of God alone to have a steady foreknowledge of such things; no created being can dive into them: that man cannot, as reason would sufficiently prove, so scripture also does no less clearly demonstrate. Isaiah xlvii. 11, God speaks to Babylon; "Evil shall come upon thee, and thou shalt not know from whence it ariseth: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know:" hereupon, in the two next verses, he defies them to find them out with all their sorceries and enchantments: in the twelfth verse, "Let now the astrologers and prognosticators stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee." If any man could foresee future events, then certainly it would be those who made it their business and their profession; those who had not only their own understanding, but all the light of heaven to direct them. A man may as easily draw the perfect picture of a man yet unborn, as have in his mind the idea of a contingent future.

Who knows what a day may bring forth? God has put obscurity between us and the nearest futures; there is night between us and the very next day. To the proofs drawn from scripture, we may add the overplus of our own experience. And that angels are also to seek in the certain knowledge of these things is no less true. Had those fallen angels, before their sin, foreseen what would have followed it, we cannot but in reason imagine, that the foresight of their fall would have kept them from their sin. Hereupon the devil, in the heathen oracles, when he was consulted about future events, gave always doubtful, ambiguous answers; so that, however the thing fell out, he had still a salvo or evasion in the ambiguity of the expression. It is confessed, that sometimes his predictions have been answered by the event of the thing; but then this was rather from the happiness of his conjecture, than the certainty of his knowledge. And as one says, "Angels have the advantage of us in respect of their experience, which is far greater in them than in us, both because they have been of longer duration and continuance in the world, and also because of the piercing quickness of their understandings, in comparing one thing with another; and from thence making conjectures at other things." Now experience is



a reiterated or repeated knowledge of things past; from whence arises an ability of judging and guessing at things future. And thus far angels can go, and no further. As for that argument by which some would prove that angels know things future, because distance of time and distance of place are equally accidental differences; and we know, distance of place does not impede the knowledge of angels; therefore they may know things, notwithstanding the difference of time, that they are future. I say, this argument proves nothing, because the case is not the same, in respect of difference of place and of time. Distance of place always **supposes** the existence of the things that so differ: futurity, which is a difference of time, puts a non-existence of the thing; for that which is future is not yet in being. And since all created knowledge follows the existence of the thing known, there can be no knowledge of that which does not exist, but of that which either exists, or is supposed and looked upon as existing. But now, God knows contingent futures, yea, and that certainly and infallibly; and the reason is, because the most contingent being, when and while it actually exists, is, in its being, necessary: *Omne quod est; quando est, necessario est.* But all things are present to God; they are looked upon by him as under an actual existence; from whence we may collect, that he has a certain and necessary knowledge of them.

(3.) The third sort of things, known only to God, are the thoughts of men: it belongs to the sovereignty of God's omniscience alone to judge and know these: Psalm cxxxix. 2, "Thou understandest my thoughts afar off." This is attributed to God, by way of eminence; and every such thing is not only proper, but also peculiar to him; so as to be communicated to nothing else: for that cannot be ascribed to God by way of distinction which is also common to the creature. Angels, indeed, do exactly know our constitutions, and so can read the general inclination of our thoughts in them, but not the particular determination of them, *quoad hic et nunc*, in respect of particular objects and circumstances; and also, when the thoughts move and stir the passions, and the passions work some change on the body: for, as natural philosophy teaches, every passion (which is a motion of the sensitive appetite) *fit cum aliquâ mutatione corporis non naturali*. I say, in this respect, the angels may know the thoughts, as they betray themselves in some outward corporeal sign; but by any immediate inspection of the thoughts themselves, so they are not able to discern them. It is a privilege that God has given to our nature, to be able to conceal our thoughts; next to that by which we are able to communicate them: Jer. xvii. 9, "The heart is deceitful above all things; who can know it?" None can read the thoughts, none can behold the intentions and desires, but that God, who vouchsafes an influence to the production of every thought and every desire:

1 Cor. ii. 11, "Who knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is within him?" It is well known, that these interrogations imply strong denials. Who can know the things of man? that is, none can know them: they are not subject to the inspection of any being but God. For, notwithstanding this universal negation, we must of necessity except him, because the scripture elsewhere makes a peculiar exception of God, even there, where it affirms that the heart cannot be known, Jer. xvii. 10, "I the Lord search the heart: I try the reins." From hence therefore appears the transcendent excellency of God's knowledge, beyond all created, that it is able to pierce into men's thoughts.

III. I proceed to make some *application*; and to see what uses may be deduced from the consideration of God's omniscience: it may serve as an argument to press several duties upon us.

1. It must be a strong motive to bring us to a free confession of all our sins to God. God's omniscience, or infinite knowledge, should indeed make us ashamed to commit sin; but it should embolden us to confess it. We can commit and tell our secrets to a friend that does not know them; how much more should we do it to him that knows them already. God's knowledge outruns our confessions, and anticipates what we have to say. As our Saviour speaks concerning prayer, "Your heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you ask," Matt. vi. 8. So I may say of confession, your heavenly Father knows what secret sins you have committed before you confess. But still he commands this duty of us; and that not to know our sins, but to see our ingenuity. Adam, when he hid himself, to the impiety of his sin added the absurdity of a concealment. Our declaring of our sins to God, who knows them without being beholden to our relation, it is like opening a window to receive the light, which would shine in through it howsoever. Every man has *fenestratum pectus*, a casement in his bosom, through which God looks in upon him every day. When a master sees his servant commit a fault in secret, and thereupon urges him to a confession, he does it not so much to know the fault, as to try the man. Now there is no duty by which we give God the glory of his omniscience so much as by a free confession of our secret iniquities. Joshua vii. 19, Joshua says to Achan, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him." Here we see, had he not confessed his theft, he had been guilty of a greater, to wit, the robbing God of his glory. Thus the widow of Tekoah, by confessing her design and project to David, gave him the glory of his wisdom and knowledge. Hereupon, having confessed it, she says, in 2 Sam. xiv. 20, "My lord the king is wise, accord-

ing to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are done in the earth." God seems to compound with us, and in lieu of satisfaction, only to require our confession; Jer. iii. 12, 13, "I am merciful, saith the Lord, and will not keep anger for ever; only acknowledge thy iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God." Nay, God commands us to confess our sins, not so much that he may know them, as that we may know them ourselves. For while sin sits close in the heart, we cannot see it till we cast it forth by confession; as a man cannot see the corruption that is in his stomach till he spits it out. But, howsoever, the impossibility of concealing our sins from God's omniscience, is the great reason why we should confess them; for, as we cannot rescue them from his justice, so neither can we hide them from his knowledge. God's omniscience, together with his justice, represents him to a secret sinner like a flaming fire; which by its heat consumes, and by its light discovers. Wherefore, to confess our sins, since we are not able to conceal them, what is it but, in a spiritual sense, to make a virtue of necessity?

2. The consideration of God's omniscience may enforce us to an humble submission to all God's commands and directions, and that both in respect of belief and of practice.

(1.) And first, concerning things to be believed. There is such a depth in these, and such a seeming contradiction to reason, that our natural understandings are apt to quarrel, and find absurdities in them, and to dispute against that which we cannot comprehend. Hence, in Eph. iii. 19, the apostle prays that he may "know the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge." Here we should captivate the vain reasonings of our blind understandings, and answer the defect of our knowledge, by the infiniteness of God's; who knows a reason of whatsoever he commands, and of whatsoever we ought to believe. When we hear the mystery of the Trinity, that three subsistencies are contracted into one essence, and one essence enlarged into three subsistencies; when we hear of two natures conjoined in the same person, the Creator and the creature, united in Jesus Christ; our reason is nonplussed and amazed, and cannot satisfy itself from any of its own principles. When we hear of the resurrection, that after our bodies are destroyed, and by continual transmutation brought to be clean another thing; then for the same numerical bodies to be restored, and all the scattered parts to be renewed, and return to their proper places; so that with Job, we should be enabled to see our Redeemer "with these very eyes, and no other," Job xix. 26, 27. When we hear of the mysterious, hidden works of the Spirit in our regeneration, and the begetting of new principles within us, so as to change and alter our nature; that he, which by his constitution is intemperate and furious, should be made temperate and meek; that he, which by his education is profane and

worldly, should, by the secret, forcible operation of the Spirit, become holy and spiritually-minded. I say, this startles and confounds us; and we are apt to say with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" We cannot, from any topic of reason or philosophy, give a rational account of them. But here we should know, that although these things are not intelligible by men, yet they are to the all-knowing God. And although our reason cannot discern or comprehend these things, yet God is greater than our reason, and knoweth all things.

(2.) The consideration of God's infinite knowledge ought to make us comply with God's commands in things concerning our practice, and that even in those duties that to our natural judgments may seem unreasonable. He that renounces the dictates of his own carnal wisdom, and prosecutes the ways prescribed to him by God, has set to his seal, that God is wise and infinitely more knowing than himself. For all our disobedience, our relinquishing the ways of God, and adhering to our own, may be resolved into this; that men think they know a nearer way to happiness than God has prescribed them; which, how derogatory it is to the all-knowing wisdom of God, let our own reason be judge. Why do we follow the advice our physicians and lawyers, but from the opinion we have of their knowledge and experience. Absalom, by not doing according to Ahithophel's counsel, did in that clearly undervalue his wisdom; and the discredit of that made Ahithophel hang himself. Now the most wise and omniscient God, that knows the utmost of sin, that knows what it is for a sinner to be saved, and to escape the stroke of his justice, does, in order thereto, command us to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, to renounce our dearest pleasures, our nearest relations, as they stand in competition with Christ; yea, to prefer the most unpleasant duty before the most pleasing sin. Here flesh and blood is at a stand; and, as it cannot endure the strictness and rigour, so neither can it see the reason of these commands. But what Elijah said to Israel in the case of Baal, that I may here apply, "Why halt we between two opinions?" If God, who has commanded and enjoined these duties, be the all-knowing God, why do we not then, without any further delay, perform them? If he be not, why do we then give him divine worship? Wherefore I shall conclude with this most certain truth: There is no such way of giving God the glory of his infinite knowledge, as by an obediential practice of those duties and commands which seem most to thwart and contradict our own.

3. And lastly, since it is an express command of our Saviour himself, that we should "be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect;" why should we not, according to our weak model, endeavour to copy out this divine perfection upon our soul, as well as any of the rest? And why, as well as we are commanded to be like him in his goodness, bounty, and mercy, we should not

endeavour to resemble him in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, according to our weak capacity? For this is not to say as Lucifer, "I will ascend, and be like the Most High;" nor to follow what he suggested to our first parents, "Ye shall be like gods:" for had they affected to be like God in knowledge, as they ought to have done, they would have certainly discerned the cheat of the serpent, and the trials which the devil was then putting upon them. No; it is no arrogance for us to endeavour to be like God, in passing a right and true judgment upon all things that concern us; in judging of holiness as God judges; in judging of sin, as God judges of every thing relating to our temporal or eternal happiness or misery. "God," says the apostle, "is light, and in him there is no darkness at all." We do not disparage nor rival the great fountain of light, the sun, by endeavouring to have as much of his light in our houses as we can. We have our rule and measure to proceed by, in our imitation of our heavenly Father, in this respect, as well as in any other: for as it is the perfection of God to know all things, so it is the excellency of man to know any thing aright.

To God therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

## SERMON XI

PUBLIC CALAMITY A CALL TO PUBLIC HUMILIATION.

JONAH III. 8, 9.

*But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God ; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not.*

THE business of the day is not unknown to you ; we are called by public authority to the work of humiliation ; and the cause and occasion of this work you are acquainted with, to wit, the deplorable eruption of a sad distemper, in sundry parts of the nation ; and the cause of this we are to know is sin. There is no calamity, but if we track it to its original, we shall find it issue from sin. They are the distempers of the soul that cause the distempers of the body ; therefore, if we would recover our bodily health, we must begin the cure at the soul. Fasting and humiliation is a sovereign remedy to evacuate all spiritual distempers ; and what is true in physic of the body, *tertia pars morborum sanatur jejuniis*, that the third part of diseases is cured by fasting, is much more true in divinity, in respect of the soul ; that not only some, but all its diseases are removed, or at least weakened and diminished by a spiritual fasting.

In this chapter we have the example of a fast celebrated by heathens, but worthy of the imitation of the best Christians ; and if we do not fast and humble ourselves, now a judgment is actually lying upon us from God, certainly the men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment against this generation, and condemn it ; for they fasted and humbled themselves upon the very approach of a judgment.

Here are several things considerable :

1st. Jonah's denunciation of a judgment of God impendent upon them.

2dly. Their humiliation upon the hearing of this judgment : in which fast or humiliation there is considerable.

1. The manner of it ; which consists in two things : 1. The external humiliation of the body. 2. An internal spiritual separation from sin.

2. The universal extent of it, " Let man and beast," &c. ; and withal the particular application of it, verse 8, " Let them turn every one from," &c.

3. The ground or motive of this humiliation ; which was hope of mercy and a pardon upon the exercise of this duty.

The words will afford several observations.

1st. The consideration of a judgment approaching unto, or actually lying upon a people, is a sufficient argument for fasting and humiliation, ver. 4, 5.

2dly. That an afflicting of the body is a good preparative to the humiliation of the soul, ver. 6, 7.

3dly. That the nature of a fast more especially consists in a real, sincere separation from sin, ver. 8.

4thly. That national sins do deserve national humiliation, ver. 5.

5thly. The best and most effectual way to remove a national judgment, is for every particular man to inquire into, and to amend his own personal particular sins, ver. 8.

6thly. Upon a serious humiliation for, and forsaking of our sins, there is sufficient argument in God's mercy to hope for a removal of the severest judgment, ver. 9.

I chiefly intend the discussing the five observations ; but I shall speak something to them all.

1st Obs. Concerning the first : *that the consideration of a judgment, &c.* Extraordinary occasions call for extraordinary services. Every judgment overspreading a nation is an extraordinary judgment ; and fasting bears some proportion to it, as being an extraordinary duty. When God shall shake his sword over a nation, and the inhabitants take no notice of it ; when he shall begin to take hold of judgment, and the people not take hold of his mercy in prayer and repentance ; these are sad symptoms of a decaying, if not perishing state. When the son sees his father about to whip him, and has already laid hold of the rod, will he not fall down upon his knees and ask him pardon ? Now we ought to humble ourselves under a judgment upon several accounts.

(1.) Because in every judgment God calls for humiliation ; they are the alarums of the Almighty, by which he terrifies and awakens sleepy souls. We read of the "voice of God's rod," Micah vi. 9, and the rod of God in every judgment speaks this ; either that we should begin or renew our repentance. For a people to hear the dreadful voice of a displeased God in a judgment, and yet not to be wrought upon to proceed to a speedy humiliation ; it is like Samuel's hearing the Lord speaking to him when he was a child, in the midst of his sleep ; the voice comes, and awakes him, he hears it, yet takes little notice of it, but presently returns to sleep again. If we can so pass over the voice of God in a judgment, as presently to return to our former sleep and security, it is an act of high contempt and disobedience.

The proudest of the heathens, and the greatest contemners of

a Deity, yet would be amazed, and endeavour to hide themselves when they heard it thunder. Could the voice of the cloud make them shrink and tremble, and shall not the voice of a national judgment make us mourn and repent? God calls for mourning and lamentation, his voice is plain and loud, and woe be to us if we do not hear it.

(2.) We ought to humble ourselves under every judgment, because it deserves our humiliation: though this be an displeasing duty to the flesh, yet it is abundantly countervailed by the greatness of the trouble it does remove. Not only Christianity, but nature bids us mourn under an affliction. To what do we reserve our sorrows, if we do not spend them upon this occasion. Lam. iii. 48, "Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water, for the destruction of the daughter of my people." The prophet found no such time for weeping as the time of public calamity. Then did Hezekiah mourn and humble himself, when there was a devouring army of the Assyrians approaching. If the securing of your health, your lives, your temporal, your spiritual estates, does not merit the deepest of our humiliations, our strongest wrestlings with God in fasting and prayer, then keep these duties for something that may better deserve them.

2nd Obs. *That the affliction of the body is a good preparative to the humiliation of the soul*; thus we see in Joel ii., where there was a solemn fast proclaimed, and directions given for the keeping of it, it is said, in the 16th verse, "Let the bridegroom go out of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet." Bodily and sensual enjoyments must be laid aside; and that which is prescribed to us for the right celebration of the sabbath, that a man should not find his own pleasure, in Isaiah lviii. 3, is upon the same account requisite to a due performance of this duty. Sensual delights are not consistent with spiritual services.

Now the reasons that the affliction of the body is so good a preparative to the humiliation of the soul, are,

(1.) Because the operations of the soul do much follow the disposition and temper of the body. There is a near connexion and a sympathy between these two. There can scarce be grief and pleasure in one, but the other partakes. Pleasure! it melts the soul through the body, as lightning does the sword through the scabbard. Can the body be pampered, and the soul not grow wanton? Can the carnal objects of sense be received, without leaving a tincture upon the mind? When the body is filled and feasted, the soul is not in so fit a posture to hunger and thirst after righteousness. Herod, after his feast, is fit to behead, but not to hear John Baptist.

(2.) The afflicting of the body, it curbs the flesh, and makes it serviceable to the spirit. The flesh is unruly, and repugnant to the yoke of a spiritual service; it has a natural averseness to them, and as long as it is indulged, the opposition is so much the



stronger: wherefore, if we would keep our hearts close to so heavenly a duty, we must sequester them from the incentives of carnal objects. "I keep under my body," says St. Paul. In all these engagements the spirit must keep under the body, or the body will be above the spirit. The body is and ought to be the soul's instrument in the execution of all duties; but if it be not rightly fixed and disposed, it may recoil upon the soul, and hurt it: as a hatchet, if not rightly ordered, may fly off, and mischief him that uses it. O let us therefore lay aside all flesh-pleasing vanities; let us abandon those delights that encumber the soul, that clip its wings, and hinder its aspiring to heaven. It will be part of our happiness and perfection hereafter to have spiritual bodies, let us endeavour to make them so now: "Canst thou not watch with me an hour?" says Christ: canst not thou fast with me a day? It is our duty to deny ourselves in these outward refreshments, so far as it may quicken and enable us to a more nimble performance of so severe a duty. Let us follow the example of the Ninevites in the text; "Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth." Let our brutish part, our body, as well as our manly part, our soul, be brought under the spiritual yoke of humiliation. But it may be here said,

(*Objection.*) Is not this contrary to what our Saviour prescribes in the gospel, who in express terms forbids us this afflicting of the body in our fastings? Matt. vi. 16—18, "When ye fast, be not as hypocrites, of a sad countenance," &c. Now, how can this scripture consist with the truth of this doctrine, that the affliction of the body tends to advance the devotion and humiliation of the soul?

In answer to this, we may observe;

1st. That Christ does not absolutely forbid them to be of a sad countenance, but with this qualification; "Be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance." There is a difference between a religious and an affected sadness; between a due composure, and a dissembling of the countenance: one is spiritual duty, the other is spiritual pride; one adorns, the other destroys humiliation. And those that do in this manner, and for this end, disfigure their faces, that they may appear to fast, they make themselves more deformed in the eyes of God, than in the eyes of men.

2dly. Christ does not forbid such a sadness of countenance as was the natural effect of an inward sorrow. For as it is said, "Mine eye affecteth mine heart." Lam. iii. 51, so the heart will affect the eye; spiritual sorrow will break out into the countenance. But the Pharisees had a peculiar way among themselves, of making and deforming their faces, in their days of fasting; in which they placed the chief part of the duty (as the papists do in whipping themselves); and it was against this abuse that Christ cautioned his disciples. For when he bids them, on the contrary, anoint their head, and wash their feet, it was not meant

of ornament, but of a decent dressing of themselves, according to the custom of those places. So that he does not here oppose jollity and looseness to a due and serious sadness, so as to command that in the room of this; but he does oppose a prudent decency to an absurd superstition. And thus much in answer to this objection, and concerning the second observation.

3rd *Objection*. I proceed now to the third; viz. *that the nature of a fast especially consists in a real, sincere separation from sin*. The truth of this will appear from these considerations:

(1.) That fasting, it is a spiritual duty: the humbling of the body indeed is required, not so much as a part, as an instrument of this duty; it is separation from sin that God requires and the soul must intend: it is thy heart, and not thy stomach, that God would have empty. It is not thy outward mourning or complaining, not the presence of thy body in the church, not thy abstaining from bodily food, that makes a fast; for what does it avail thee to forbear thy meat, if thou dost feed upon thy sin? what does the sackcloth and the ashes, if thou art not clothed with righteousness? God overlooks and rejects all these services, as a piece of provoking mockery, if they are not attended with a sincere renouncing of thy sin. Thou mayest have a thin, pining body, and yet a luxurious soul; thou mayest hang the head like a bulrush, and yet aspire in thy mind like a Lucifer. Let us not deceive ourselves, for God is not deceived. If our sin abides after all our fasting, we shall return to it with a greater appetite. To leave our sin, and exercise the opposite duties of holiness, this is that which gives a relish and a savour to all our humiliations before God. In Isaiah lviii. 4—6, God roundly tells his people what was truly a fast, and what was no fast, in his esteem.—Not to abstain from bread, but to deal it to the hungry: this is properly to fast; not to wrap thyself in sackcloth, but to cover and clothe thy naked brother; this is to be humbled. Hence, in Jer. xxxvi. 6, 7, we have the prophet presenting the children of Israel, upon their fasting days, with a catalogue of God's commands: this was their bill of fare upon such days. Take therefore a survey of the state of thy soul; is there such a corruption in thy heart? remove it; such a sin in thy hands, such a blot upon thy conscience? wash it out with the tears of a true repentance. He that only forbears his meat, and not his sin, the beasts of Nineveh kept as good a fast as he. It is as unseemly to come to a fast with a foul heart, as to dinner with foul hands.

(2.) The nature of a fast chiefly consists in our separation from sin, because this is the proper end of it. As the end of eating is to strengthen the body, so the end of fasting is to strengthen the soul. For as our Saviour speaks of some unclean spirits, Matt. xvii. 21, so it is true of some kind of sins, that they are not to be cast out but by fasting and prayer. This is

the greatest means of mortification of sin, and that which of all others carries it on most effectually; it is that which lays the axe to the very root of our corruption. It is a duty that is marked out by God's institution, for this very purpose. David, that was most in this work of mortifying his sin, that omitted the use of no means that might weaken his corruption, he gives us an account of what course he took, Psalm cii. 4; he tells us, that "he forgot to eat his bread;" and Psalm cix. 24, that "his knees were weak through fasting." Now, all that he aimed at in this, was the getting the upper hand of his corruption, that he might starve his sin. So that it follows, that if our fasting attain not the proper end for which God designed it, it falls short of its nature, and cannot properly be called a duty. True it is, that one end of a religious fast is to prevent or remove God's judgments; but how does it effect this? It is not by removing in, that is the cause of those judgments? No humiliation ever took off an affliction, before it first took off the sin. Misery is the natural consequent of iniquity; and he that endeavours to rid himself of one, before he has freed himself of the other, would hinder the streams before he has stopped the fountain. Humiliation! it quenches the wrath of God, by removing the combustible matter of sin upon which it preys. When this affords no fuel, God's anger ceases to burn. A plague, or a disease, sent from God, will scarce be able to hurt or infect that soul, which has cleansed and purged off all its ill humours, by a thorough humiliation. It is clear, therefore, that the removal of sin is the very essence of this duty, without which all other humbling ourselves is so far from being profitable, that it is abominable: Joel ii. 13, "Rend your hearts, and not your garments." If the heart be not torn off from sin, to rend only the garment, it further provokes God, and, as I may so speak, makes the breach wider. To what purpose does the riotous drunkard strain himself to a fast, if he does not from this gain strength against his intemperance? To what ends does the profane, the covetous, the neglecter of sabbaths, engage in this duty, unless he gathers spiritual strength, to walk more closely with God for the future? This we must know, that there is no religious duty that attains its end, but when it weakens our sin.

And thus much of the third observation.

4th *Obs.* *National sins deserve national humiliation*: there must be some proportion between sin and sorrow. Humble repentance is to cure us of our sins and miseries; and there can be no cure wrought, unless the plaster be as broad as the sore. If a whole nation sins, a whole nation must also repent, or perish. If a whole world corrupts itself before God, it must either be humbled, or be drowned. The highest to the lowest have provoked God; there has been a joint concurrence in sin, therefore all must jointly concur in humiliation. When a distemper has

seized the whole body, there must be a general change of the whole habit and frame of it, otherwise no sound recovery can be expected. The body of a nation should speak to God, as Peter did to Christ, when he washed his feet; "Lord, wash not my feet only, but also my head and my hands." Let thy Spirit enable not only the vulgar sort, but the great ones, to abase themselves in tears and repentance. The spirit of humiliation should be like Aaron's precious ointment, running down from the head to the skirts and hem of his garment. This was the custom of the religious princes of Judah, when they were to deal with God about public mercies; they knew their sins were general, and therefore that their humiliation was to be of the same extent, 2 Chron. xx. 3, 4, "And Jehoshaphat feared and set himself to seek the Lord; and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah:" and Jer. xxxvi. 9, it is said of the princes of the people, that "they proclaimed a fast before the Lord to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem." Now the reasons that there is such a universality required in our humiliations, may be,

1. Because a general humiliation tends most to solve the breach of God's honour. A prince that has been offended by a general rebellion, cannot be appeased but by a general submission. This is a lively acknowledgment of God's majesty; when a nation shall lie in the dust before him; when he shall be praised and adored in the great congregation; by this we confess him the Lord of nations: and that he is able to destroy us, though we unite ourselves into multitudes; and that we need be humbled, and tremble at his power, as much as if we were but one single person.

2. Generality gives force and strength to humiliation. When an army of humble penitents besieges heaven, it is hard if their prayers do not force their way through: *Credidimus junctas fortius ire preces*; many hands give despatch to a difficult business. And humiliation is a very hard task, and justly requires many helping hands to be lift up together in prayer. General sins are strongest to bring down a judgment; therefore, general humiliation must needs be strongest to prevent it. I proceed to the

5th Obs. viz. *That the best and most effectual way to avert a national judgment, is for every particular man to inquire into, and to amend his own personal particular sins.* I shall prove the truth of this assertion by several reasons:

(1.) Because particular sins oftentimes fetch down general, universal judgments. Sin, like a leprosy, though it begin in a small compass, yet it quickly, in the effects of it, overspreads the whole. It may first appear like that cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, 1 Kings xviii. 44; but it presently overclouds and darkens the heavens over us, and showers down the heaviest of God's judgments. Adam's sin was but the sin of one man, and yet

how large and extensive were the dimensions of the curse! it diffused itself to all his posterity, and that in all places, in all ages. When David numbered the people, none but David sinned; yet all Israel felt the smart of the punishment, thousands fell under the pestilence: the penalty of this sin was as large as his dominions; the curse, it reached from Dan to Beersheba. But here it may be replied, these, indeed, were public persons, and their offences public, and therefore the punishment might be so too. But then, what shall we think of Achan? he was no public person, no governor, no representative of a people; yet we see his one particular trespass, in meddling with the cursed thing, caused the whole armies of Israel to fly before their enemies; that one sin chased a thousand, and put ten thousand to flight, Joshua vii. And again, did not the sin of a few profane Benjamites scatter and almost devour a whole tribe? Judges xx. From these examples we may make this natural conclusion to ourselves, that what God did then, if he please, he may do the same now.

The reasons that God sometimes, for particular sins, inflicts general judgments, may be these:

1st. To show us the provoking nature of sin; and that we live upon the score of mercy, and not by any title that we claim to life from our own righteousness; it is a mercy that God does not destroy for the sins of other men. Was it not a singular mercy to Lot, that he was delivered from the common destruction, though he never shared in the common sin? The righteousness of the whole world, since the fall, is not able to save one man; but the sin of one man, if God should deal according to the rigour of his justice, was enough to destroy a whole world.

2dly. God deservedly sometimes sends a general judgment for a particular sin; because though the sin is particular, in respect of the subject and cause of it, yet it may be general in respect of its contagion. The plague, though but in one man, yet it is able to derive a general infection over a whole city. Thy sin, though the commission of it abides upon thy particular person, yet thou dost not know how far the example of it may spread. David's murder and adultery, as to the personal guilt of it, went no further than himself; but we know the scandal of it was very infectious; it caused the enemies of God to blaspheme: God, therefore, may deservedly avenge particular sins with general judgments.

(2.) As some particular sins are the total cause of a general judgment, so all and every particular sin shares and contributes its part in the bringing down of a judgment upon a nation, though it be not always the only cause of that judgment: a universal sin is made up of many particulars: if there were no personal, there could be no national sin. We may look upon our own particular miscarriages as small things, and not discernible

in so great a crowd; we may think that the sins of one man are no more considerable, in respect of the sins of a nation, than one man is in comparison of all the inhabitants of the nation: yet one man's sin, though in itself it should be weaker, yet as it is joined with the sins of a multitude, it will do no execution. One soldier, taken by himself, is of no considerable force; but as joined to the body of an army, he will conquer and trample down towns and cities. One single drop of water, how contemptible is it! but as it is joined to the ocean, so it is terrible; it drowns, it destroys. Wherefore let none flatter himself, and think that his sin has no share in the misery of the nation; for every particular man may think so, as well as one: and if it should be true of every one, to whose sin should we ascribe the calamities we endure? "For the sin of the inhabitants a land is said to mourn; a fruitful land to be made barren, for the wickedness of those that dwell therein." And who knows but mine and thy sins may have provoked God to visit the nation with this distemper? How dost thou know, but thy profaneness, thy drunkenness, may cause the land to mourn: thy slighting God's ordinances, and thy causeless absenting thyself from his worship, may cause God to appear against the nation in anger. When a barrel of gunpowder is fired, does not one corn as well as another, contribute to the blowing up of the house? Certainly if the nation should receive some great blessing from God, upon the score of desert, would not every particular man be apt to thrust in, and ascribe some part of it to the merit of his own particular righteousness? How much more should we take shame and confusion to ourselves, and mark out our own personal sins, as those that have stuck deep in the nation's misery! As it is the duty of every particular soldier in the army to fight in the day of battle, so it is equally the duty of every particular Christian, to mourn in a day of humiliation.

*3rd Reason.* Because God takes special notice of particular sins; punishing of a multitude does not make God overlook particulars; but he takes a distinct view of each several man's transgression; as in our reading over a volume, the eye takes a distinct view of every letter. It is our prudence to take notice of those sins that God takes notice of; and, as it is our prudence to take notice of them, so it is our greater prudence to lament them. Hence we have God, in scripture, so often singling out some sinners: in particular, Deut. xxix. 18, God, speaking to the whole body of the Israelites, says, "Take heed, lest there be amongst you a root that beareth gall and bitterness." One would think that in so large a garden one weed might escape his eye: but the eye of God, like the sun, as it enlightens the whole world, so it discovers every little atom. It is said that God would "search Jerusalem with candles: so exact is he in his survey of each several man's condition. In Psalm xiv. 2, "God looketh down

from heaven, to see if there were any one, whose heart sought the Lord: and in the third verse he brings a particular report of their wickedness; "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." He speaks as if he had searched and considered them one by one. Now the consideration of this, that God takes a particular notice of our personal misdemeanours, should engage us to set about a particular amendment. When workmen know their master will come, and take a particular account of each man's several task, this is a sufficient argument to make them fearful to be negligent, and incite them to be accurate in their performance of it. God oftentimes, in a general judgment, has a more especial design upon some few particular sinners; as when Joab drew up a party of men to be slain by the Ammonites, his design was only directed to the death of Uriah. God, when he commissions his plagues to go over a nation, he gives them more especial charge to visit such and such a sinner. God sends a war and the sword abroad to such a nation; but be sure, says he, take such a secure sinner, such a covetous person in your way: let his goods and his substance be rifled, and made a spoil: I have observed, that his heart has been estranged from me, and wholly set upon the world. He bids a sickness go to such a people: but be sure, says he, forget not to take off such a backsliding, incorrigible sinner; he cumpers the ground, and I can bear with him no longer. To speak according to the manner of men, God does as really mark out and separate some sinners, more especially, to a general destruction, as David gave his captain a more especial command to preserve Absalom. This is a third reason why men should, in their humiliations, descend to a particular removal of their personal sins, because God accurately considers them.

4th Reason. No humiliation can be well and sincere, unless it be personal and particular. It is a saying, that there is *dolus in universalibus*, deceit in universals. In general acknowledgments, a man is apt to put a fallacy upon his soul, and to take that for repentance which is no repentance. He that is truly humbled and repents, his voice must be, not "We have sinned," but, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan, when he would force home a sound, real humiliation upon David, he makes his case particular, "Thou art the man," 2 Sam. xii. 7. The only word that dropped from Pharaoh, that seemed to have something in it of true humiliation, was that in Exod. ix. 27, "In this I have sinned: the Lord is righteous, but I and my people are wicked." Now it is clear, that this is the only true way of humiliation, for this is the way and the method that the Spirit of God takes in humbling the soul; it makes a personal particular application of all God's curses against sinners to the soul. The word in general says, "Cursed be he that continues not in all these things that are written in the law, to observe and do them." Here the Spirit comes in, and with much power tells a soul, "Thou art

the man," thou art he that has broken God's commands, violated his laws, trampled upon all his precepts, and therefore thou art he that liest under the dint of this heavy curse: God means thee; God speaks to thee in particular; therefore take it to thyself, and be humbled. Now the reason that a man's consideration of his particular sins is the means to produce a true and thorough humiliation is, because man is only humbled for those things in which he is concerned; and no man looks upon himself as concerned in a general evil, till he makes it particular by a personal application. When we hear of sickness abroad, we are not much moved; but when we find the symptoms of it upon our own bodies, then we speak more feelingly of it, and use the utmost care to remove it. The notions we have of sin, and misery that follows sin, are but common and superficial, till we make them particular by our own experience. If we would kill our sins, we must not shoot our arrows at random, at sin in general, but single them out, and take a distinct aim at every sin in particular. Although to make the work of humiliation more easy, I should advise the soul to this way, because we may master and conquer these sins by our sorrows, that we take severally and apart, which we could not well deal with in the heap. Those evils most affect our sorrows that most affect our apprehensions; but sins, as they are represented to us in particular, chiefly affect our apprehensions: generals and universals leave a confused, imperfect notion in the mind; but particulars leave a more clear and evident impression. Thus much of the fourth reason to prove this doctrine, that it is the best and most effectual way to avert a general judgment, for every particular man seriously to inquire into and amend his personal particular sins.

6th *Observation* is, *That upon our serious humiliation for, and forsaking of our sins, there is sufficient argument in God's mercy to hope for a removal of the severest judgment.* Now the truth of this will appear from these three things:

(1.) Because God has promised upon true humiliation, to remove his judgments.

(2.) Because he has often actually removed them upon such humiliation.

(3.) Because, when we are brought to be thus humbled, God has attained the end of his judgments.

(1.) There is argument for this hope, because God has promised it. Mercy, it is the only refuge of a lost creature, the only prop of a decaying confidence, it is God's endearing attribute. But since we have sinned, God's justice keeps us from relying upon his mercy, till his promise gives us leave; this is that alone that opens a door of mercy to a forlorn soul, and makes that confidence become duty, which would otherwise be presumption. In Leviticus xxvi. the Spirit of God reckons up many sad and dismal curses which should befall the children of



Israel if they did apostatize from God, and break his commands. Yet in the 41st and 42nd verses, he promises them an after-return of mercy upon their humiliation. So merciful is God, that he closeth his threatenings with prescriptions how to avoid them : and in the midst of judgment shows the way how to regain mercy. What God promised to Israel he does as truly promise to us ; for his mercy, that caused him to make this promise, is the same yesterday and to-day. And as the apostle observes, no promise is of private interpretation. In the forementioned Jer. xxxvi. 3, "It may be," says God, "that the house of Judah will hear all the evil that I purpose to do unto them, that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin." Where God forgives the sin he always removes the judgment. Why do we not then engage our utmost in these duties ? Is not God's promise true, that we should not believe it ? and if it be true, and we do believe it, is it not worthy our closing with it, by fulfilling its conditions ? We have cause enough to believe, that God is much more willing to remove than to bring judgments upon men. It is reason enough that we should humble ourselves under God's judgment, though he had made no such promise of mercy ; even for this cause, that by our humiliations we might prevail with him to make us such a promise. But how much readier should we be in this duty, now the promise is prepared and presented to our hands ! Surely if our miseries abide upon us, it is not because God is wanting to us, but we are wanting to ourselves.

(2.) There is argument for hope, because God has often removed judgments upon a sincere humiliation. And if we cannot command our faith to believe what God has promised to do, yet let us believe what God has done already. Every instance in this nature, it is an overplus of evidence to overrule us into this persuasion. A promise with an instance, it is like an excellent medicine with a *probatum est*, ratified by experience. The first instance of those that have tasted mercy after humiliation is that in the text, the 10th verse, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way ; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not." God will let men see that he can more easily repent of his anger than they of their sins. The second instance is that of Manasses ; a prodigy of sin, one, as it were raised up on purpose, in whom it might appear how far wickedness might proceed ; yet we know upon his humiliation, God turned his captivity, and set him loose from his chains, and from a prison (a thing seldom known in any age) he returned him to a kingdom, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13. Now is there any man that can rationally doubt of the strength of humiliation, after it has restored a Manasses ? The third instance is that of Ahab, one almost as deep in sin as Manasses ; one that sold himself to do

wickedly ; a king of Israel, yet a slave to sin ; polluted with the blood of his innocent neighbour ; yet when the curse of God met him, and shook him into a humiliation, 1 Kings xxi. 29, God's anger thereupon leaves him for a while, and though his justice could not let him take away the punishment, yet his mercy caused him to defer it. God's fury in this case, if I may so express it, something resembling an ague ; it shook him for a while, and then it left him. All divines do agree, that Ahab's humiliation was not sincere, but only hypocritical. Now if God were so merciful as to reward the bare outside of an humble repentance with such an abatement of a judgment, will he not answer and reward thy hearty, sincere humiliation with an entire removal of it ? In Psalm cvii. 17—19, "Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted ; their soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and they draw near unto the gates of death ; then they cry unto the Lord in their troubles, he saveth them out of their distresses." Here we have another kind of unsincere repentance, seconded with an undeserved reward. And can God so love the very picture of humiliation, and not love and embrace that much more ? Can the bare show of repentance delay God's stroke, and shall not the reality and truth of it avert it ? Certainly this is the only reason that God shows himself so favourable to hypocrites' bare pretences, that he may encourage our real endeavours.

(3.) There is argument to hope for the removal of a judgment upon true humiliation, because in this God attains the end of his judgments. No need of further purging when the humour is carried off. God's actions extend no further than his designs. God does not punish that he may punish, but that he may humble ; wherefore, when humility is produced, his punishments proceed no further : God is of too great mercy to triumph over a prostrate soul. There is a resurrection from misery as well as from the grave. It is true God is said to kill, 1 Sam. ii. 6, but in the next words it is added, that "he makes alive." God does not punish us that he may thence receive satisfaction for our sins, for then, as our sin is infinite, so our punishments would be endless. All satisfaction is laid up in Christ, and when we are thoroughly humble for sin, that satisfaction is then actually made ours. No wonder, therefore, if God's judgments vanish before that satisfaction ; if it removes a temporal judgment, that rescues from an eternal. This is certain and worth our observation, that God never sends a judgment upon any of his children, but it is for one of these two ends, either to prevent or remove sin. Oh, says God, here is a poor soul that is hugging and embracing its sin, pleasing itself in its own ruin ; unless sin be embittered to it by some severe affliction, it will never leave it, but perish in it. Here is another ready to sin, in a posture to close with any temptation, going on in the ready road to death. Oh, says God,

here is another poor creature, that if some sharp judgment does not meet and stop it, it is posting on with a full career to its own perdition. Now God does effect both these works, to wit, the removal and the prevention of sin, by the instrumental help of a thorough humiliation. Consider therefore with thyself, thou that hast lain a long time under any cross or affliction from God, has thy affliction humbled thee? has it weakened thy sin, strengthened thy hands to duty? if it has not thou hast cause to fear that God will either continue that judgment that now presses thee, or bring a greater and a sorer evil upon thee. But, on the other hand, if thy affliction has wrought kindly, if it has cleansed off the filth and corruption of thy heart, if it has brought thee to disesteem the world, and value Christ, to look upon sin as a greater evil than death, believe it, God has done his work upon thee, and he will quickly remove either the judgment itself, or the venom and sting of it. Now the showers of repentance are fallen, the clouds of God's wrath are vanishing: and he is coming forth to meet thee as a poor returning prodigal. He looks upon thee as he did once upon Ephraim, Jer. xxxi. 18—20, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, &c., therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." If thou hast a heart to mourn over thy sin, God has bowels of compassion to yearn and relent over thee. If thou canst in sincerity say, I will sin no more, God is as ready to say, that he will afflict no more. Believe it, if thou hast a purpose to return to God, God has mercy to return to thee.

To which God therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

## SERMON XII.

POVERTY OF SPIRIT ENJOINED BY THE GOSPEL.

MATTHEW V. 3.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

It is doubtless a great paradox in the general judgment and opinion of the world, that any poverty, of what sort soever, should be desirable: forasmuch as every one desires to enjoy the good things of the world, and thereby to enjoy himself; to the attainment of which, riches are the most acknowledged means. And if these are the prime instrument of enjoyment, poverty surely must be the main opposite to it. But the gospel we confess, is a system of paradoxes and absurdities to the maxims of the world; the grand rule, which the generality of mankind both live and judge by, being to follow the full bent of their sensuality. And therefore our Saviour begins this his notable and great sermon on the mount, with seven or eight such propositions, as directly oppose and bid defiance to the opinions and practices of the carnal world: and these he ushers in with the commendation of that so much abhorred thing, called poverty. And that also such a poverty, as rests not only in the surface of the body, clothing that with rags, or, which is worse, with nothing; but such a one as enters into the very soul, and strips the spirit, leaving that naked, destitute, and forlorn.

In the words we have these two things considerable:

I. A quality or disposition recommended by our Saviour, which is poverty of spirit.

II. The ground and argument upon which it is recommended, namely that it entitles him who has it to "the kingdom of heaven."

I. And for the first of these, *the thing recommended by our Saviour, viz. poverty of spirit.* In the treating of which, I shall, 1. Declare the nature of this poverty of spirit; and, 2. Show the means by which it is to be obtained.

As for the nature of it, I shall give an account of this,

First, Negatively, by showing what it is not.

Secondly, Positively, by showing what it is, and wherein it does consist.

First of all then, that excellent thing here recommended by our Saviour is not

(1.) A mere outward indigence, and want of all the accommodations of common life. For certain it is, all want, considered merely in itself, and not as sanctified by the Spirit of God to some further use, is a curse, and consequently can of itself make no man blessed; as the poor, here spoken of, are pronounced to be. It is possible that a man may be poor, in point of wealth, but yet abound in sin and vice; and experience shows, that there is not a more unsanctified, wretched, and profane sort of men under heaven than beggars commonly are; whose manners entitle them to a less portion of happiness in the other world, than they can have in this. Many beg of us for Christ's sake, whom Christ will never own; as being the very shame and spots of Christianity; persons void of all sense of virtue, all conscience of duty, either to God or man; swearers, railers, idle, useless drones, and intolerable burdens to society. Nay, and we shall sometimes find poverty in conjunction with such vices, as seem to be directly crossed and taken away by poverty. For how poor are some, and yet how insolent! what pride lurks under their rags, like a snake under the leaves! Yea, and how luxurious are many! for there is scarce any man in the world, be he never so poor, but some time or other chances upon opportunities of luxury: so that those common expressions, 'as proud as a beggar,' and 'drunk as a beggar,' are so far from being either false or improper, that they are the most full and significant descriptions of a person possessed with these vices, to the utmost height of them, that can be found out. Many there are who embrace dunghills, the filth and offensiveness of whose lives does exceed them; and who are sordidly and nastily habited, whose clothes are but an emblem of their hearts, and a lively picture of their manners.

Poverty is not always the lot of the righteous, and the true servants of God, who make a conscience of their ways; but sometimes, by the just disposal of Providence, comes to be the inheritance also of the wicked, the unconscionable, and such as would be rich, if they could, upon any terms whatsoever: but the curse of God has been too hard for them, and put them behind-hand in spite of all their gains: so that whatsoever they have got has insensibly melted and mouldered to nothing. Their riches have never stayed with them, but "made themselves wings and flown away;" and thereby taught the world, that to get and to thrive are not always the same thing.

Besides, that poverty very frequently is the direct effect and consequent of sin and vice. The drunkard drinks off his estate like his cups, to the very bottom, and leaves nothing behind. The vain-glorious man wears his fortunes upon his back, till at length he has worn them out. The contentious man follows the law against his neighbour, for the gratification of his revengeful humour, so long, that in the end the very obtaining of the cause

does not defray the charges, or remove the poverty contracted by its prosecution.

But now, certainly, such a poverty can be no more recommended by our Saviour than the sinful causes of it. For Christ commands no man to be luxurious, ambitious, or revengeful, in order to his making of himself poor. He who is the one will undoubtedly be the other. But the interest of religion and virtue is not concerned, that a man should be either.

In a word, poverty is usually the effect of sin, but always a temptation to it. For it provokes the corrupt heart of man to discontents, murmurings, and repinings, to sinister and base courses for his relief, unless there be a predominant principle of grace, to compose and quiet the dissatisfactions of nature. This therefore cannot be the thing to which Christ pronounces a blessing. For whatsoever renders a man blest may be the proper object of his prayers: but none surely ought to pray for a temptation, or to petition heaven for a great calamity. But

(2.) The poverty of spirit here spoken of is not a sneaking fearfulness and want of courage; for there is nothing base in nature, that can be noble in religion. Cowardice is neither acceptable to God nor man; it neither promotes the honor of one, nor the good of the other: it being indeed the portal and broad gate through which most of the unworthy and vile practices that are seen in the world, enter upon, and rifle the consciences of men. So that in Rev. xxi. 8, St. John reckoning what kind of persons shall be cast into "the lake that burns with fire and brimstone," amongst "murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, and idolaters," ranks "the fearful." And why? Because fearfulness betrays a man almost to all other sins. So that the fearful person is incapable of making good any relation of common life, whether in the capacity of a subject, a friend, or a servant; for a man's fear will make him speak, swear, or do any thing, to rescue himself from an impending danger.

And if this had been the proper virtue and qualification of a Christian, there would never have been any such thing in the world as martyrdom; as owning of Christ in the face of tyranny and torment, and holding fast the Christian faith upon the rack and in the flames. And therefore it is "the righteous man" only, who, Solomon tells us, "is as bold as a lion;" and who carries in his breast a heart too big to "fear those who can only kill the body." In many passages and circumstances of life, it requires no ordinary pitch of courage for a man to dare to be good; and he must be a valiant as well as a conscientious man, who can and will choose duty, when it is beset with the greatest danger, and can defy the powers of darkness, as well as abhor the works of it.

Wherefore, since the poorness in spirit here spoken of by our Saviour is neither to be understood of meanness or timorousness

of spirit; it is much that some should make the badges and characters of such a pitiful temper the proper indications of piety, and the marks of a more improved Christianity. For do not many by a sneaking look, and a whining voice, affect the reputation of pious and devout persons? Do not many behave themselves so, as if there were no going to heaven but by creeping, no passing through the strait gate but upon all four? But such persons understand not the nature of the Christian religion, if they think that such ignoble qualities can be any parts of it. Christianity is a superstructure upon, and an addition to the excellencies of nature: and therefore, if a pusillanimous spirit debases and degrades a man, considered but as a man, it can neither adorn or improve him in the capacity of a Christian.

Having thus, by a negative consideration, shown what this poverty of spirit is not, I come now, in the next place, to show positively what it is, and wherein it does consist. In order to which, we are to observe, that poverty, or want, is properly a privation of fulness, or abundance, and consequently opposed to it. Now a man may be said to be spiritually full, when he abounds in a confident opinion, both of his own righteousness, and his happiness thereupon: and therefore poverty of spirit, which is its direct opposite, may be said properly to consist in these two things:

(1.) An inward sense and feeling of our spiritual wants and defects; and,

(2.) A sense of our wretched and forlorn condition by reason of those wants.

(1.) And first, it consists in an inward sense of that deplorable want of holiness, which we are in by nature. We are born into the world destitute, and surrounded with innumerable infirmities: and, in the phrase of the apostle, in the Revelation, ch. iii. 17, "poor, miserable, blind, and naked." All the powers of our souls are crippled and disordered, and rendered strangely impotent to the prosecution of good. Our judgments are perverted, our wills depraved, and our affections misinclined, and set upon vile and unworthy objects. This is the portion and inheritance which we derive from our first parents: these are the weaknesses and evils we labour under; and the first step to a deliverance from them, is to be sensible of them: for we shall never attempt to be what we are not, till we come to dislike what we are.

Self-opinion and self-love are the great strong holds which the gospel sets itself to beat down; for by nature we are as prone to overvalue as to overlove ourselves; but in both of them there is a kind of spiritual fulness and repletion, which must be removed and carried off, before the gospel can have its effect upon us. For Christ comes with a design to infuse his gifts and graces into the soul; but there is no pouring of any thing into a

vessel which is full already. And therefore a man must be emptied of all his vain and fond conceptions and principles; and, in a word, of himself too, before he can be prepared and qualified for the infusions of the Spirit.

He who thinks himself holy and righteous enough is a most unfit subject for the gospel to work upon, indeed he is scarce fit for repentance; for Christ "came not to call the righteous," that is, those who thought themselves so, "but sinners to repentance:" sinners, who in their consciences stood convicted of their sinful estate, who beheld the "plague of their own hearts," the sores and leprosy of their souls: these were the men who stood in the next disposition for the reception of mercy, for the alms of heaven, and the compassions of a Saviour: for these are such as Christ properly calls the heavy laden, and upon that account invites to himself. As for the Pharisees, and the opinionators of their own holiness, the spiritually proud, confident, and disdainful, they were men of another dispensation: the gospel knows them not, nor justifies any such; it finds them standing upon their own bottom, and so also leaves them to fall.

That soul, upon which the spirit of regeneration has truly passed, is utterly of another temper; it is still apt to bemoan and to condemn itself: it sees its own scars and deformities, and upon the sight of them falls down, and wallows in the dust before the pure eyes of God. The true Christian temper shows not itself upon the mountains of pride and self-opinion, but dwells low in the valleys of humility, self-denial, and spiritual dejection.

And as it behaves itself thus towards God, so it demeans itself with a proportionable condescension to men too. He who has this evangelical poorness of spirit, is still apt to think others better and holier than himself; for his conscience teaches him to think the worst of his own heart, and his charity prompts him to judge the best of his neighbour's.

Upon a due consideration of which, I have often wondered, and indeed think it a just matter of wonder, how some persons are able to reconcile their high and loud pretences of piety, and a more than ordinary purity, with that insolence and spiritual pride, which breaks forth in every part of their conversation. For how do some as it were, monopolize the covenant of grace wholly to themselves, calling themselves the only people of God, the saints, the godly; looking upon all round about them as heathens and reprobates; and upon that account separating themselves into little companies and congregations, as not being willing to join, forsooth, in a less refined way of God's worship! Which persons, though they have the good fortune to find friends to countenance them upon a supposed political account, such as call compliance prudence, and cowardice moderation; yet upon what grounds of true piety and religion can these pha-



risaical separatists acquit themselves? I am sure not upon this, which recommends poorness in spirit; for did ever any one yet, endued with this excellent grace, say to his brother, "Stand off, for I am holier than thou?" or bid defiance to a whole church, and spit in the face of all church-governors, as every conventicler certainly does, upon a supposal of his own transcendent purity and perfection; which neither upon clear evidence of ~~scripture~~, the practice of former ages, nor the judgment of many ~~thousands~~ more knowing than himself (as they may very easily be), ~~he is~~ at all able to make out or demonstrate? Such persons may flatter themselves as they please; but the gospel must alter its voice, and say, Blessed are the proud in spirit, the censorious, the insolent, and self-opinioned, before they can either have any solid ground of comfort, or real title to a blessing.

Where true poverty of spirit dwells, a man thinks of nothing less than his own perfection, which he utterly disowns. There is no beggar and forlorn distressed person that more keenly feels the afflicting hardships of hunger, cold and nakedness, than such a one feels and groans under his spiritual wants; he laments the hardness of his heart, his want of life and activity in the performance of duty; he complains of the weakness of his faith, the instability of his hope, the dispersion and wanderings of his affections; he cannot pray with that fervour, hear with that attention, and practise with that steadiness and perseverance, which, he is sensible, becomes the excellent and exact measures of Christianity.

These blots and flaws in his Christian course his eye is constantly upon: and as they are the objects of his thoughts, so they are the continual matter of his sorrow. Let this therefore be the first thing in which consists this poorness in spirit here recommended by our Saviour in the text; namely, a sense of that deplorable want of holiness, which we are in by nature.

(2.) The second thing in which it consists, is a sense of our wretched and miserable condition by reason of such want; the wretchedness of which appears from these two considerations.

1st. That we are utterly unable, by any natural strength of our own, to recover and bring ourselves out of this condition.

2dly. That during our continuance under it, we are exposed and stand obnoxious to all the curses of the law.

1st. And first of all, this evangelical poverty of spirit makes a man sensible in how wretched a condition he is, by reason of his own utter inability to redeem himself from it. He finds his understanding much darkened, so that he cannot perceive and judge of the things of God; and his will full of weakness and impotence, as to its choosing of them: it sees no beauty in holiness, why it should desire it; but the stream of all its appetites and inclinations wholly runs out after other things, things evil and pernicious, and tending to the direct ruin of him that does

embrace them. All this does a person so qualified find and feel in himself; but, for all this, is still unable to enlighten his own understanding, to sanctify his will, or correct his inclinations: but, like a man bound hand and foot, and thrown into a quagmire, there is he like to lie and sink, for any succour that he can give himself, unless such as pass by have compassion on him, and relieve him.

And therefore, as the assertion of Pelagius of the freedom of the will, and its full power to choose things spiritually good, even since the fall, is indeed a great piece of nonsense in itself; so those that maintain and insist upon it sufficiently declare themselves to have little or no experience of their own hearts: nor can all the rhetoric of men and angels persuade a person truly poor in spirit, and fully studied in his own spiritual wants and defects, that he is able to repent when he pleases, to believe when he pleases, and to perform all the divine commands. For he looks upon it as a contradiction, and a defiance to his experience, which he will not believe and subscribe to, in spite of all the world, as he has good reason.

And therefore, in his use of all outward means of grace, he depends upon them no more than if he used them not; but upon the Spirit of God only working in them; for he knows it is he alone that can change his heart, and that must be changed, or a man cannot be saved. It is in his power indeed to hear and read the word, and to say his prayers, but this will not do his work; and for this cause it is, that God often suffers a man to wait upon him for many years in the use of these duties, and yet gives him not his desired success, in the change of his heart, and the conquest of his corruptions, merely to convince him of the emptiness and inefficacy of all means considered in themselves; and to show him, that when these great things come to be wrought for him, it is the sole grace of God, to which he is a debtor for all.

It would be long enough before we should hear a person endued with this evangelical quality, to talk of his merits and his superelegations, of his fulfilling and even outdoing the law: for these are whimsies framed and minted in the heads of those, whose hearts never served them to be experimentally pious. That poverty of spirit that has a claim to the kingdom of heaven, neither discourses nor thinks after this manner; but vents itself in that doleful passionate exclamation of St. Paul; "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" It convinces a man that he is carnal and sold under sin, and sold to a more than Egyptian bondage, to the yoke of Satan, and the tyranny of his own base domineering affections.

But surely none is ever heard to cry out with so much vehemence, "Who shall deliver me?" who thinks that he is able to deliver himself. None calls in for auxiliaries from abroad, who

finds a sufficiency of strength to secure him at home. Let this therefore be one part of the misery of that wretched condition that this poorness in spirit makes a man sensible of, namely, that he is utterly unable by any strength of his own to get out of this condition.

2dly. The other part of its misery, which this evangelical poorness makes a man also sensible of, is, that during his continuance under this woful condition, he stands liable and obnoxious to all the curses of the law. A sad consideration certainly, that a man should be in a condition from which he is not able to rid himself, and in which, if he remains, he is infallibly ruined. Yet this is the state of every man by nature. He is born in sin, and "the wages of sin is death;" death in its utmost compass and latitude, considered with all its retinue of miseries and calamities, which, as its harbingers, make way for it, and by degrees usher on the last and fatal blow, which from temporal sufferings translates a man to eternal.

Whosoever has a right spiritual sense of sin, knows the terror of the law, and the dreadfulfulness of the curse; what it is to live under the sentence of damnation; every day, every hour, every minute expecting its fearful execution. And he knows also, that till the Spirit of regeneration puts him within the verge of the second covenant, he is responsible for the breach of the first, which makes all that his portion, that the law awards, and the wrath of God inflicts upon transgressors.

Now surely he that lives with these apprehensions quick upon his mind, with the terrors of the Almighty fresh upon his conscience, must needs carry about him all the dejection, poorness, and lowness of spirit before God, that we can imagine in a malefactor convict, and ready to suffer before men. His heart fails and sinks, and is utterly at a loss where and upon what foundation to fix. Only he knows that the hands of mercy are not tied, nor the bowels of divine goodness wholly shut up against sinners; and that, as it is enough to rescue him from despair, so on the other side it is far from ministering to confidence and ostentation.

This is properly the person who works out his salvation with trembling and continual fears; as knowing that corrupt nature has treasured up fuel enough in his breast for the wrath of God to feed upon for ever: between which and himself nothing can interpose, but the free unmerited relentings of the divine compassion; which, like the wind, blows where it lists, and lays itself out upon whom it will, as being above the claim and challenge of any sinner under heaven, whose title lies clear and questionless to nothing but the curse. Now the sense of a great misery impendent upon a man, naturally casts his mind into a depressed and an abject posture. For what person living can be bold, free, and cheerful, who knows that he lives every minute upon cour-

tesy, that he breathes by the connivance of his great judge, and a suspension of that sentence that the law has already pronounced, and justice may execute when it pleases. Such must needs look upon themselves as lost and undone by nature : and those whose eyes God has never yet opened, to see themselves in such a woful forlorn estate, but have passed their days with a blind assurance, void of the least grudging, doubtful, or suspicious thought about the safety of their spiritual condition, are not yet arrived to that poorness in spirit that all must come to, before they arrive to heaven.

For indeed it would be but salvation and redemption thrown away, for Christ to save any, who are not convinced that they are ruined without Christ. None shall enter the gates of heaven, whose fears and apprehensions have not sometimes placed them upon the brink of hell. For the vastness of such a change is that which sets a price and a crown upon mercy ; and the apprehended nearness of utter perdition, that which enhances and endears salvation.

Having thus shown the nature of this poverty of spirit, and that both negatively, by distinguishing it from what it is not, as also positively, by declaring wherein it does consist :

2. I proceed now to the next thing, which is to show by what means this frame of spirit is to be obtained.

As for the cause from whence it must flow, that is evident without inquiry. For being a supernatural grace, it springs not from the stock of nature, but descends from above, from that eternal Spirit, that is “ the author and giver of every good and perfect gift.” Reason is too weak a principle to discourse a man into so excellent a disposition. A disposition that holds no intercourse with the flesh and the world, but raises the mind to such desires, such ways and courses of acting, as not only transcend, but also thwart and oppose all his earthly affections. But still, though the Spirit be the only productive cause of this evangelical virtue, yet there are certain means to be used by us, with the use of which he concurs, in the production of it ; for God will treat us like rational agents, and not like senseless logs, requiring us to bear an active share in the promoting and carrying on of that great affair of our eternal happiness. Now there are three ways, by which, through the concurrence of the Holy Ghost with our endeavours, we may at length bring ourselves to this blessed poorness of spirit, a quality of so much value in the eyes of our Saviour, of so much worth and weight in the balance of the sanctuary.

(1.) The first is a frequent, deep, and serious considering of the relation we stand in towards God. The contemplation of which will show us that unmeasurable distance that is between him and us. It will convince us what nothings we are in comparison of him that first raised us out of nothing. When we

consider the unlimited perfections of his nature, we shall find our thoughts even swallowed up, and our understandings dazzled, as not being able to fathom so great an abyss, or to behold so radiant a brightness. And this must needs dash all esteem of ourselves, and bring us out of love with our own little supposed excellencies. He that accustoms himself to meditate upon the greatness of God, finds those questions continually rising and stirring in his heart, How shall dust and ashes ever be able to stand before him? how shall weakness and imperfection enjoy that nature that it is at a loss even to think of, and never contemplates upon without amazement? The creature never appears so pitiful and inconsiderable, as when it views itself with one eye, and its Creator with the other.

Every thing is more apparent as it stands compared with its opposite. Man is but a weak and a contemptible thing at the best; but much more contemptible, if compared to an angel, and yet infinitely and inconceivably more despicable must he be, if compared to God. A glow-worm signifies little if compared but to a candle; but set it before the stars, consider it in emulation with the sun, and the ruling lights of heaven, and what a silly ridiculous thing must it appear!

While men consider nothing but themselves, they may grow proud and conceited; for little things may be valued by those who never saw greater. He that never saw the day, may admire and dote upon his lamp. But consideration and experience of great things reduces and degrades little petit matters to their own proper dimensions. "Those that measure themselves by themselves," says the apostle, "are not wise." For when we make a thing its own measure, it is impossible to discover any defect in it. But bring it to another thing that excels and outshines it; and then we shall quickly see how much a tree is taller than a shrub, and a royal palace greater and nobler than a country cottage.

Men are enamoured with their own reason; but let them compare it with omniscience, and it is nothing. They perhaps value themselves upon their dominion over these inferior things, but what is all their grandeur to the royalty and universal empire of Providence? what is their policy to the wisdom of him that governs the world, and "charges the very angels with folly?" It is impossible for a man, that frequently and seriously thinks of God, to value himself.

Now to these considerations we may add that also of our unprofitableness to God. For by all that we either are or do, we can contribute nothing to that immense fulness that is in him. And if it were possible that some emolument might rise to him from our services, yet it were infinitely needless; for what want could there be in all-sufficiency? What need could his ocean have of the drops of our bucket? "Thou desirest not sacrifice,"

says David. And God himself gave the reason why he does not, in Psalm l. 9—12, "I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine; and the cattle upon a thousand hills. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." We need not ply his altar with sacrifices, or spread a table before the Almighty, as if he ate the flesh of bulls, or drank the blood of goats. It is like that in the Jewish economy, many were so stupid and gross in their opinions of God, as to think that they gave him a repast, and a large meal in all their burnt-offerings; for certain it is that many of the heathens thought so. And therefore, God upbraids them with those absurd discourses, by vouching his dominion over all the stores of nature, by which, if he had thought fit, he could easily have supplied himself without the ministry of any of the sons of men. Now what those absurd persons thought of their sacrifices in relation to God, the same now-a-days think many of the Christians of their prayers, their services and religious works, that from these is imported so large a revenue to the divine honour, that God is much the better and the richer for them, and could not maintain his glory to the same height in the want of them. This is the philosophy of the popish operators in all their religious performances. But may not God answer these men about their so much valued services, as he did the Jews about their sacrifices? —I need none of your prayers, none of your humiliations, my glory is above them, and entire without them. But if the service of any of my creatures might be of advantage to me, is not the whole host of heaven mine? Have I not thousands and ten thousands of angels, ready at a word to fulfil my will, to execute my commands, and to speak my praises?

Surely if these men dwelt much upon the contemplation of God's glorious nature, they could never esteem themselves for paying God those services, of which he stands in no need, and by which the substantial greatness of his honour is not at all increased. For most true it is, that there is no accession to the divine perfections, by the very best and utmost that the holiest person in the world can do. And if there was no other rational end and use of our obedience than this, God would never exact it. For the ends why he exacts and requires it of us are, that it may be both a testification of our homage to him, and an instrument of good to ourselves. That is all, for there is no end of profit or advantage on our Creator's part served by it, who is neither a greater God or a mightier Lord, because we serve him or pray unto him. Since, if we did not, he could equally make good his honour upon us, and fetch his pennyworths out of us by damning us for our disobedience.

Let a man think much of this, and make God the measure of his perfections and his services; and he cannot but see cause to

bring down his spirit, and to make it poor, and humble, and base, in all his reflections upon himself: it will show him how mean and useless a thing he is, as to the compassing of the great ends and designs of heaven; how easily Providence can be without him, without any straitening of itself; and how far he is from being necessary to the setting forth of the glory of his Maker. We know how high Job bore himself, in the apprehension of his own integrity, which he thought gave him the vantage ground so far, as to be able to expostulate and to reason it out with the Almighty; nor could all the discourses of his friends reduce him to a right understanding of himself, so as to bring him upon his knees in a submissive acknowledgment of the righteous proceedings of his great Judge. Nothing could control either the risings of his spirit, or the insolence of his speech, till God himself undertook and encountered him out of the cloud, displaying his greatness, his power, his wisdom, and his other surpassing perfections, laying all these before his astonished eyes, as we have them fully described in those four excellent chapters, xxxviii., xxxix., xl., and xli., of Job: and the man's stubborn heart began to bend, and to come down from its heights; then he presently knows himself, and his distance from God; his deplorable weakness, and his vileness, and so breaks forth in those expressions, Job xlii. 5, 6, "Behold," says he, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee." What follows? "Wherefore," says he, "I abhor myself." It was the clear sight of the glory and greatness of the divine nature that humbled him to this self-abhorrence, and altered the tune of his former self-justification. Now let every confident, self-valuing person, compare himself with those descriptions of God in the forementioned chapters; and if he has but his understanding and his judging faculties about him, I doubt not but they will have the same effect and impression upon him, that they had upon Job, and make him descend some steps lower, till they have brought him to the level of "the poor in spirit." Let this therefore be one way for the obtaining of this evangelical virtue, for a man to think much of the transcendent greatness and majesty of God, and his own unspeakable distance from him.

(2.) The second course that he is to take for the same purpose, is for him to be much in comparing himself with the exceeding exactness, perfection, and spirituality of the divine law. Self-esteem, which is the thing properly and directly opposite to this poorness of spirit here spoken of by our Saviour, is the effect of men's rating themselves by false measures; and, as I show, that men's not measuring themselves by the infinite perfection of God's nature brought them to overvalue their persons, so now their not measuring themselves by the sublimity and exactness of God's law, will bring them to the same false valuation of their

actions and services. "The law of the Lord is perfect," says the psalmist, Psalm xix. 7. But certain it is, that no mortal man is so ; and yet it is as certain, that thousands think that they are, and accordingly entertain thoughts of pride, naturally consequent upon thoughts of perfection.

But now what is the cause of this error, and where and how do men gather up these unreasonable thoughts? Why it is from their ignorance of, or non-attendance to the law, which requires a perfect original uprightness and rectitude in the whole man, and throughout all his natural faculties ; it requires also a constant holiness and purity in his very thoughts and first inclinations ; it requires a universal, uninterrupted practice of the same in all his actions, and through the tenor of his whole life : and this it does with that unrelenting strictness and rigour, as not to allow of the least deviation or turning from the rule ; but inexorably curses every the least and most minute transgression of it in thought, word, or deed. This is the economy and constitution of the law : "but who is sufficient for these things?" What man can answer all these demands, or live up to these heights? What merit-monger among all the sons of supererogation will promise and engage, upon the utmost peril of his soul, that from the first to the last minute of his breathing in the world he will never do, or desire, or so much as think any thing amiss? But if this be an undertaking too vast for weak flesh and blood, that will have its failings, and lives merely upon the stock of grace and pardon ; then let every man let fall his crest, forget his pride, and learn to be poor in spirit, till he is richer in good works.

Let him come off from those false weights and wrong measures, that pervert him in his judgment about all his actions. Some have contrived the body of practical divinity into easy and flesh-pleasing propositions ; such as make salvation attainable by something less than a good life. Now, so long as men trust to, and steer by such directions, they may quickly and easily grow into a very good opinion of their own piety and perfection, when to be pious and to be perfect, is only to live up to an imperfect and a faulty rule : but it is a ready and easy way of proficiency, for a man to learn as much as he is taught, when he is taught but very little.

Others again there are, who measure the piety of their own lives by the scandalous and enormous impiety of other men's ; and will therefore conclude themselves holy, because they neither revel it with the drunkard or the epicure, swear with the profane, or grind the face of the poor with the tyrant or extortioner : all which are heights and great improvements of villany, and such as have many degrees under them, many impieties of a lesser guilt and malignity, yet enough, unrepented of, to damn and destroy the person in whom they are found. No wonder therefore if men take up a fair opinion of themselves and their own righteousness upon these grounds ; and if they count themselves



very good indeed, so long as the being good is only not to be as bad as the worst.

But now what course is to be taken to dispossess men of this false and flattering opinion? Why, surely, that course prescribed by the prophet, Isaiah viii. 20, "to the law and to the testimony." The doctrines of men may deceive us, and examples may blind us; but there is no trick, or fallacy, or imperfection in the law, which issues from the fountain of infinite truth and goodness, and so is reached forth to the world as that absolute indefective copy of divine holiness, that all mankind is to write after. This is a glass in which the fairest soul may see its spots and deformities; a glass that will not, that cannot flatter: and therefore he that shall view himself in it frequently and attentively, shall see enough to shame and humble him into poorness of spirit: he shall see how many flaws and defects there are in his choicest and most accurately performed duties; how many infirmities cleave to his warmest devotions, that the letter of the law would curse and condemn. And surely, upon a due survey of this, if he has but a spiritual sense of spiritual things, he cannot but loathe and despise his own righteousness, as a torn and ragged garment, utterly unable to cover the nakedness of his soul; and consequently think himself the most miserable person in the world, if there were no other righteousness for him to trust to. This therefore is a second way of obtaining this evangelical poorness of spirit; namely, for a man to compare himself and his actions with the high and absolute perfection of the divine law.

(3.) The third and last that I shall mention is, for a man to make a due and a spiritual use of all those afflictions and cross events, that the providence of God is pleased to bring him under; for every man shall assuredly have his share of these sooner or later, before he quits the world. And, as the scripture says, "affliction springs not out of the dust;" though it may seem to us an accident, yet God does it by design: and what should he design by it, but to discipline and cure the soul by the adversity of the body? Though the subject-matter of most calamities is something temporal and external, yet the end of them is certainly spiritual; and this end can be no other, than by this means to bring us to a sight of our own wretchedness, and great obnoxiousness to the anger of God, whensoever he shall be pleased to let it loose upon us. For such is the blindness and stupidity of man's heart, that while these outward enjoyments flow in fast upon him, he never thinks of those things: spiritual pride and security drive all these thoughts out of his mind; and he cannot frame himself to a thorough practical and severe consideration of that woful and forlorn estate that he was born in, and that he lives and continues in, so long as ease and prosperity keeps him from feeling any of the penal effects of it: but he is cheerful,

frolic, and gay, and while he thrives in this world, questions not his happiness in the other.

But when a mighty blow from heaven strikes away all his comforts, and leaves him stript and naked, despised and trampled upon; then other thoughts naturally begin to take place; then the ministers of his outward man minister to him sad and misgiving reflections upon the condition of his inward, and make him doubt where the great calamity may end. For his heart must needs tell him, that affliction is but the consequent of sin, and that also such a one as will determine where the worse and greater consequences of sin shall but begin: and then how unspeakably miserable would his lot be, should all these temporal hardships be but preludiums and beginnings of an intolerable weight of wrath reserved and treasured up for him hereafter! Every affliction carries in it many excellent instructions to a considering mind, when it humbles him under the feet of the insulting world, and covers him with contempt and scorn. It can tell him also, that sin makes him infinitely more contemptible and vile in the sight of God, who despises a wicked person more than the world can undervalue a man for his poverty, while it scoffs at his thread-bare clothes and his empty purse. For God knows that the penury and bareness of a soul unjustified, and uncovered with the robe of Christ's righteousness, represents it more shameful than Job in his utmost misery appeared to be, when he sat naked and afflicted, full of noisome sores and ulcers, upon the dunghill, a mock to others, and a burden to himself.

When men feel the afflicting hand of God pressing them, there is also a voice from the same God, calling upon them to search for the cause of that grievance in their own sinful breasts; and since they so much abhor the bitterness of the stream, to bethink themselves of the overflowing malignity of the fountain, and to hate and abhor that much more. For this is the only thing that God drives at: it is not so much the poverty of our purses, as of our spirits, that he regards; and if the former does not produce and occasion the latter, there is an affliction; that is, an opportunity of grace lost and misspent upon us. But he that will husband every temporal calamity to a spiritual advantage, will strike in with the divine methods, and being humbled by God, will humble himself yet further. Every judgment shall read him a lesson of himself, discover to him the vanity of his confidence, make him low and destitute in his own eyes, and so impoverish him into the best, the fullest, and the most abiding riches.

And thus I have finished the first general head proposed from the words; namely, the quality or disposition here recommended by our Saviour, which was poorness in spirit.

II. I shall now speak something briefly of the second; to

wit, the ground or argument upon which this poorness of spirit is recommended : which is, that it entitles him that has it to the kingdom of heaven.

Christ never enjoins us any duty, though ever so irksome, so harsh, and so displeasing to flesh and blood, but still he makes it worth our pains to comply with him, even in those his severest and most unpleasant commands. For a man to loathe and despise himself, to whom nature has made self-love so delightful, and almost inseparable, must certainly be a hard lecture, and not easily learned, because so little liked ; yet Christ invites us to it, with no less a recompence than the gaining of a kingdom ; he calls upon us to exchange an airy conceit for a substantial enjoyment, pride for glory, and opinion for possession. If to be poor is a frightful word, and such as carries but little allurements in it to persuade, yet surely a kingdom sounds big and high, and the kingdom of heaven yet higher ; and this is that which is held out and offered to us to reconcile us to the former. To be poor for a time is but an easy task, when the reward that follows it is to be rich for ever : it is a duty that carries a blessing in its front, and is contrived into such words, that it exhibits the reward before it enjoins the work. Heaven is the first thing that it sets before us, and thereby seems not so much to exact as to purchase our obedience. Upon which account, though there is required poorness of spirit in point of duty, I am sure there is requisite largeness of spirit to make us capable of the reward. Now in these words, "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven," two things are worthy of our remark.

1. The thing promised, the "kingdom of heaven," which I conceive does not here precisely signify the future state of glory allotted for the saints in the other world ; but that whole complex of blessings that is exhibited to mankind in the gospel, the economy of which is frequently styled by the evangelists, "the kingdom of heaven." So that the meaning of the words is, that those great and glorious things that the gospel is big with, belong only to the humble, lowly, and full of the sense of their own unworthiness, as being the only proper and capable subjects of them. But now the gospel offers grace as well as glory ; it gives the Spirit, with all its helps and assistances, to recover the soul of man to some measures of the divine image, worn out and defaced by original sin. There is a great deal of heaven that the gospel imparts to believers in this world, giving them the first fruits of glory in the sanctification and justification of their persons, and those high privileges of sonship and adoption, by which they are re-possessed of, and reinstated in all those rights that had been forfeited by sin, and so come to have a new claim to what they enjoy here upon earth, as well as what they hope for in heaven ; for they are the saints only to whom even these temporal blessings descend by covenant and filial relation

to God ; which the rest of mankind receive only as his vassals, by the liberality of a general and promiscuous providence.

2. The second thing to be remarked is, the manner in which heaven is here promised ; which is in words importing the present. I show indeed that the future state of blessedness was not the only thing here intended, yet it is undoubtedly the principal ; and Christ here conveys it to the saints in terms not expressing future, but actual possession ; not "theirs shall be," but "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." They do not so much expect, as grasp it : it is not so much set before their hopes, as put into their hands, and from expectation passes into fruition. By this way of speaking, Christ designs to seal to us the certainty of the promise, and to assure us that we have firm hold of heaven, before we find an entrance into it.

The world surely would think that the poor man is of all persons living the most unfit to make a purchase, especially to buy kingdoms, and to bid a price for a crown and a sceptre. But it seems that the evangelically poor man can do all this, and yet not exhaust himself ; which shows that the spiritual person is never so indigent, but that he can still outbid the world, and possess himself of that which all the riches upon the earth cannot compass ; for immortality and heaven, and not only heaven but also the God of heaven himself, is his possession.

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

## SERMON XIII.

## PART I.

## THE HOPE OF THE HYPOCRITE DELUSIVE.

## JOB VIII. 13.

*The hypocrite's hope shall perish.*

THERE is nothing in the world, though never so excellent, but it has its counterfeit : religion and grace itself are not exempted : so that in these matters, as well as in others, we often suffer a fallacy in our choice, by embracing resemblances instead of things. Sincerity and hypocrisy are the two great things about which the whole stress and business of the gospel is laid out ; namely, to persuade and enforce the one, and to discover and detect the other. And here we have hypocrisy presented in its greatest and most flourishing enjoyment, which is hope ; and in its greatest misery, which is utter frustration.

There are only two things that can require any explication, and the words will be very clear. 1st. What is meant by the hypocrite. And, 2ndly. What by “the hypocrite’s hope.”

As for the first, all hypocrites in the world may be comprehended under these two sorts.

The first is the gross dissembler, who knowingly, and against his conscience, pursues some sinful course, endeavouring only to conceal it from the eyes of men : such a one was Gehazi, who concealed his sharking, covetous arts from his master Elisha, 2 Kings v. 25. Such a one also was Judas, while he plotted the betraying of his Lord ; he could eat and converse with him, and yet carry on a design against him at the same time ; he could bring the guest and the traitor to the same table. Such a one was the lewd woman, in Prov. xxx. 20, who took secrecy for innocence ; and putting a fair face upon a foul fact, “wiped her mouth, and said she had done no wickedness.” Such were also the scribes and pharisees, whom our Saviour upbraids so severely, Matt. xxiii. 27 ; for as they had the outward varnish, so they had also the inward rottenness of a noisome sepulchre. In short, this sort of hypocrites, the utmost of whose religion is to conceal, not to renounce their sins, comes within the number of those that are even stigmatized by the heathen, *qui famam, non conscientiam verentur* : such as prefer credit before conscience, an outward, lying, pompous appearance before an inward, sincere reality.

The other sort is the formal refined hypocrite, who deceives his own heart. He is many degrees above the other; for his conscience and his convictions will not let him take up in a course of professed dissimulation. And therefore he makes some advances into the practice of holiness; but not being sound at the heart, not being thoroughly divided from his sin, he takes that for grace which is not sincerity, and therefore much less grace; and being thus deceived, he misses of the power of godliness, and embraces only the form. Such a hypocrite we have described in Matt. vii. 26, 27; he raised a very fair building, but he laid the foundation of it in the sand. Now both these hypocrites agree in this, that they are deceivers; for deceit is the formal, constituent reason of hypocrisy: only the difference lies here, that one deceives the world, the other deceives himself; one resolvedly goes towards hell, the other sets forth for heaven, but misses of his way; one is a mere shadow, the other is a rotten substance.

I conceive, the hypocrite here spoken of in the text is to be taken in the latter sense; for the gross palpable dissembler neither does nor can rise so high as to entertain any seeming rational hope of a future felicity. For he who knows his present estate to be totally bad, and knowingly persists in it, cannot, with any colour of reason, hope that his future condition should be good. And thus much for the first thing to be explained. As for the

Second, By "the hypocrite's hope" is here meant those persuasions that a man has of the goodness and safety of his spiritual condition, whereby he strongly persuades himself that he is now in a state of grace, and consequently shall hereafter attain to a state of glory.

Yet, since it is not to be imagined that this hope is in the same proportion in all hypocrites, we may justly distinguish in it these two degrees.

1. A probable opinion. Now opinion, we know, is but the lowest degree of assent; nay, it is rather thought than assent; it is the understanding, as it were, halting between doubt and belief; rather catching at, than embracing its object. So that if opinion at best be so weak, what is that that is commenced upon a false ground? that hangs upon the thin, rotten thread of a bare peradventure? for the voice of the hypocrite is generally but the same with that of the king of Nineveh, "Peradventure the Lord will be gracious."

2. The second degree is a peremptory persuasion. This is its highest pitch and perfection; and it seems seldom to be entertained, but where hypocrisy is in conjunction with gross ignorance or judicial searedness. It is hope raised into confidence, and confidence, as it were, screwed up to a kind of plerophory; when a man is so confident of his future happiness, that nothing seems wanting but an actual possession.

These things premised briefly by way of explication, the words naturally cast themselves into these two propositions:

First, That a hypocrite may proceed so far as to obtain a hope and expectation of a future blessedness.

Secondly, That all the hypocrite's fairest expectations and hopes of such a happiness, will in the end vanish into miserable disappointment.

For the prosecution of the first of these, I shall do these three things.

I. I shall prove that hypocrites have such hopes.

II. I shall show how and by what ways these hopes are first produced in the hypocrite's mind. And,

III. I shall show how they are cherished and preserved there.

I. And for the first of these; to wit, that *the hypocrites have and do obtain such hopes*, may be evinced by these two arguments.

1. The first of which shall be taken from the nature and constitution of man's mind, which is vehement and restless in its pursuit after some suitable good. Now the happiness of man is not from within, from himself, but from without. And all the good he takes in from thence, is conveyed, and, as it were, drained through the apprehensions of his mind: and the mind, or reason, not only apprehending its present state, but also caring for the future; it is accordingly put to seek out for a good that may bear proportion to both these conditions, that is, both a present and a future; and a present good it takes in and enjoys by actual possession, and a future only by its hope. Now it is natural for every man, both in his desires and designs, to build chiefly upon the future; and that, I suppose, for this reason, because he looks upon the future only as his life. For so much of our life as is past is gone, and to be reckoned with that which is not: and the present we know is a narrow, indivisible point, enjoyed and spent in an instant: so that all our treasure and reserve is wrapped up in the future.

And that men's desires chiefly run out after things future, is clear, because the most ardent and natural of all desires, which is, that of knowledge, chiefly catches at and pries into futurities. Man naturally looks forward; the eye of the soul is like that of the body, though it passes through things immediately before it, yet it always terminates in something distant. When a man is dejected upon the sight and consideration of what he is at present, he is naturally apt to relieve himself with the hope and expectation of what he shall or may be hereafter: and it is not to be questioned, but that all the world live more by hope, than by fruition. Whence it is, that a person condemned, or mortally wounded, will say that he is a dead man; because he dates his

death, not from the expiration of his life, but of his hopes. And this is so evident, that though in things of a most different nature, yet the truth is still the same. For as in temporals no man looks upon himself as rich or happy in the present possession of lands, unless they are secured, and made over to him for ever; so in spirituals, a man that is acted but by his bare reason, finds no relish or satisfaction in any thing at present, but as it is seasoned and set off with an expectation of a future blessedness.

Every man naturally carries on some particular design, upon the event of which he builds his satisfaction; and the spring that moves these designs is hope. Hopes of the future are the causes of present action: for that the hypocrite performs some duties, wades through some afflictions, and that he makes some imperfect essays of obedience, it is all from the strength and activity of his hope: this first excites and quickens him to the work, and then animates and upholds him in it. Otherwise, the natural weakness of his mind would quickly cause him to quit the field, and put an end to such uncomfortable labours; for when the sight and expectation of good fails, it is natural for endeavour to cease. Hope is that which antedates and prepossesses a future good; that sets it in the view of the will, which alone puts all the faculties in motion. From hence therefore it follows that the hypocrite has his hope, for he has his course, and his way, according to which he acts, and without hope there can be no action.

2. The other argument, proving that hypocrites have their hopes, shall be taken from that peace and comfort that even hypocrites enjoy; which are the certain effects, and therefore the infallible signs of some hope abiding in the mind. We may take a view of the profound peace and security enjoyed by hypocrites in several instances; and first, we have the old world, though polluted with a general corruption, yet enjoying a general peace before the flood, so that in Matt. xxiv. 38, 39, they were "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and knew not till the flood came, and took them all away." Strange was the security of conscience that had seized upon these sinners; it was so great, that though death and destruction were even at the door, yet they ruffled it in the highest actions of jollity that human life was capable of. And in Matt. xxv., we have the foolish virgins at so firm a peace with their own conscience, that they could even sleep securely; shutting both heart and eyes against all thought of danger. And in Amos vi. 3, 4, we have some "putting far away from them the evil day, lying upon beds of ivory, and stretching themselves upon their couches;" free from all thought or care; unless possibly how to make their visits, or to contrive some revel, or to prepare and dress themselves for some ball or lewd meeting. Also in Zech. i. 11, we have the angel of God giving an account of the state and posture of an unsanctified world. "Behold," says he, "the whole earth



sitteth still, and at rest." To all which scriptures we may add by way of overplus the verdict of our daily experience and observation. For who so much at ease and quiet, who so jocund and free from anxious distracting cares, as those that are visibly strangers to the sincerity of religion, apparently unacquainted with the ways of God? From which temper and state of mind, we may undeniably collect and argue, that they have their hopes. For where there is comfort, there must be hope: since it is built upon this foundation, it grows out of this stock, as it is in Job viii. 11, "Can the rush grow up without mire, or can the flag grow without water?" The hypocrite's hope is indeed both a water that will fail, and a mire that will defile him; yet it is this alone, that for a while gives growth and greenness to his comforts. If the heart of man were not pitched upon some bottom, it would of necessity be continually sinking. Now hope is the great and only bottom of a hypocrite's tranquillity. It is this alone that feeds all his contents, that gives continual supplies to all his satisfactions. And if hope did not, as it were, by main force stand and guard the heart, a deluge of despairing thoughts would immediately and irresistibly break in upon it. For if sinners were assured of wrath, and had certain presumptions of future vengeance, despair and rage would waste the world, and men would sin with a high hand, that they might not only merit, but, as it were, even revenge their future sufferings.

Whence it is, that though God's decree concerning the final estate of every impenitent sinner be certain, yet it is also secret, to prevent despair. And because God may intend even those that stand sentenced by it, the transitory reprieve of a little worldly comfort, he keeps them in ignorance of it; and so long they keep themselves in hope. However, every reprobate is in this respect before God, like a condemned person with a veil drawn before his eyes. For if a man did really apprehend his case utterly hopeless, he could not master the apprehensions of common humanity so far, as to admit of the least comfort. For did we ever see a condemned person (if in his wits) dancing and ranting the day before his execution? Certainly that man must needs be far overgrown with stupid ignorance, or epicurism, who could eat and drink heartily to-day, when he knew that to-morrow he should die. Assuredly if it were not for hope, the heart of the merriest and most secure hypocrite in the world would break.

Other reasons of the point might be assigned; but I think these two sufficiently prove, that hypocrisy and hope may dwell together, that danger and confidence of safety are consistent, and that a man's persuasions may both be and often are much better than his condition. I come now to

II. The second general thing proposed, which is to show *by*

*what ways and means the hypocrite comes first to attain this hope.* I shall instance in four.

1. The first is by misapprehending God. The first foundation of this hope is laid in ignorance: for as hereafter it must end, so here it begins in darkness. Caution, experience, and accurate meditation are apt to check hope; because they lay open the difficulties of the thing we hope for. But the persons here spoken of fetch their hope not from their judgment, but their fancy. The sum of the hypocrite's creed and hope may be delivered in that of Tacitus,  *fingunt creduntque*; they first feign things, then believe them. And their grand leading mistake, which draws after it all the rest, is about God.

It is indeed our unhappiness in this state of weakness and mortality, that the most advanced in knowledge and improved in piety have yet but very lame and imperfect conceptions of the great God. And the reason of it is manifest; because we are forced to understand that which is infinite after a finite manner. For philosophy teaches, that *intelligere est pati, et pati est recipere*. And one thing receives another not according to the full latitude of the object, but according to the scanty model of its own capacity. If we let down a vessel into the sea, we shall bring up, not what the sea can afford, but what the vessel can hold: and just so it is in our understanding of God. Besides, it is the proper quality of the intellect in apprehending naturally to assimilate the thing apprehended to itself. And these are the true grounds of the natural, unavoidable imperfection of our apprehensions of God.

However, God is pleased to bear with our apprehensions of him, though imperfect, so long as they are not impious and absurd; and to accept of them, though below him, so long as they are not contrary to him. But the hypocrite frames to himself such notions of a God, as have no foundation either in his nature or his word. He does, as it were, create to himself a deity, and set up a god according to the model of his own senseless imaginations. I know nothing that does so lively characterize and express those gross, carnal, grovelling conceptions that hypocrites entertain of God, as that signal place in Psalm l. 21, "Thou thoughtest," says God, "that I was altogether such a one as thyself." That is, he took the measure of God's thoughts of sin by his own; he rated God's esteem of duty by his own indifference. Every man, through the native pride of his heart, and the deceitfulness of sin, is naturally very prone rather to bring down God to his thoughts, than to raise up his thoughts to God.

Now the soul in its course and practice of religion, having immediate intercourse with God, according to those thoughts it takes in concerning him, it is suitably affected either with fear or hope, comfort or distraction: and when it has once got this cursed

fallacious way of misrepresenting God to the conscience, there is nothing in him from whence it will not draw an argument of hope. It will suck poison out of every attribute, strain every perfection to make it subservient to the interest of its hypocrisy.

And first, for that sin-devouring attribute of God's justice, which one would think should rout the hypocrite out of all his satisfactions; yet even this attribute (which carries in it nothing but fire and brimstone, speaks nothing but lightning and claps of thunder to the secure sinners), as it is qualified and allayed by the shifts and evasions of a treacherous heart, shall not at all disturb his quiet, or entrench upon his hope. The hypocrite indeed does and must acknowledge that God hates sin, and that his jealousy burns against the sinner, that his law is violated, and his justice provoked; but then he has this evasion, that justice is God's strange work; that he does not afflict willingly, nor take any delight in the exercise of that severe attribute; and that if at any time he does think fit to exercise it, it is only upon gross, scandalous sinners, such as wallow in the enormities and pollutions of the world; such whose damnation is visibly writ upon their present lives, as swearers, atheists, whoremongers, and such like modish fashionable sinners. But as for those who are civilized in their manners, and stand guilty of no such clamorous sins, who carry a fair profession, and keep the church constantly, though perhaps it is chiefly to see and to be seen; to such the hypocrite concludes that there is no condemnation.

But now, if after all these debates and reasonings, conscience is still unsatisfied, and God's justice appears terrible, and his power grim and dreadful, yet then the thoughts of mercy shall come in and clear off all. So that if conscience and sins unrepented of begin to cry out, mercy shall cry louder: if vengeance seems ready to strike, mercy shall divert the stroke. Whatsoever objections the hypocrite can make against himself from God's justice, he will answer from the topic of his mercy.

But then here the fallacy lies: the hypocrite considers God's justice appeased and his mercy enlarged; but he does not consider the qualifications of those persons to whom these attributes bear such a gracious aspect. It is confessed, God's justice is satisfied and his anger is disarmed, but it is so to those only whose sins are remitted, and whose persons justified; and whose burden is entirely transferred, and cast upon the person of Christ their great surety, whose satisfaction wards off the sin-revenging justice of God only from the penitent and truly pious. But what is this to the hypocrite, who was never translated and implanted into Christ by a true and lively faith?

And then, for that other attribute of mercy; it is indeed infinite and boundless in its outgoings; it covers all sin, keeps off the law, and evacuates the curse. But it does these great things only for such as are true believers and regenerate, and to be so

is a harder matter than the world generally takes it for. But this the hypocrite does not consider, and therefore he retains his confidence; he catches at the mercy, but overlooks the condition; and so no wonder if he has hope, where he has no interest. And thus much for the first way by which the hypocrite raises his false hope, namely by his misapprehensions of God, and particularly in respect of those two great attributes, his justice and his mercy.

2. The second way by which he raises the same false hope is by his misunderstanding of sin. Sin, one way or other, is the true cause of all the trouble, anguish, and despair, that is incident to the mind of man. Every tear springs from this fountain. Every thought of terror and distrust issues from sin, as from its first occasion and original. But now these troubles and despairs about the main issues of a man's future happiness, being very irksome and contrary to the heart's content, a man is willing to gratify his heart so far, as to endeavour their removal, by winking at sin that is their cause. Hence it is, that men hold fast their confidence of life, though they walk in the ways of death: for they studiously cast a mist before their own eyes, that they may go on securely, and not to be forced to see that which, being seen, would certainly constrain them to lay down their hopes. Sin rightly apprehended would quickly confound all their comforts, dash their peace and security, and lay their fairest confidence in the dust.

Wherefore the hypocrite, to establish his heart in hope, labours with all his might, and casts about to relieve his conscience with such easy conceptions of sin, as may not at all grate or fall foul upon his comforts. He cannot persuade himself, that that can be so heinous and dreadful, that is committed with so much facility. Many are apt to look upon actual, as some do upon original sin, not as the error, but as the condition of their nature. Love to sin naturally covers all its deformities.

And first, for the nature of sin in general, as stript of all its circumstances and particularities. The hypocrite does not look upon it in its native filth, as contrary to the infinite purity of God's nature and his law, as leaving an everlasting indelible stain upon the conscience; no, nor yet in its dangerous effects, as dooming the sinner to all the curses that an infinite wrath can inflict: but because punishment is only threatened while pleasure is presented, the colour of the serpent covers his poison, the danger is overlooked, and the proffer accepted, and so the pardon of sin is counted as easy as the commission.

And from this undervaluing of the nature of sin in general, he quickly passes into a cursed extenuation of particulars. Some, indeed, hold and maintain a distinction of sins into mortal and venial; calling those mortal, that for their greatness and enormity deserve death; and those venial, that for their small-

ness naturally deserves pardon : which distinction, as some assert in doctrine, so all hypocrites own in practice, and it is the inward language of all their hearts. For though perhaps they may "strain at camels," yet they can easily "swallow gnats;" though blasphemies, thefts, and murders may be shunned, yet sinful, impure thoughts, words, and desires are passed over by the hypocrite not only without remorse, but without notice, as things below his sorrow, and not deserving repentance, much less condemnation. Gross external acts of sin, he knows, are visible, and therefore noways for his advantage ; so that no wonder if the hypocrite avoids these : but this is not his penitence, but his prudence ; not because he hates the nature of sin, but because he fears the consequence.

And thus I have shown the first two ways by which the hypocrite gains his hope, namely, by misapprehending God, and misunderstanding sin. And when he has wrong apprehensions of that which deserves punishment, and of him who is alone able to inflict it, I suppose it will be no hard matter to conclude, that he may easily shuffle himself into hopes of an escape.

3. The third way by which the hypocrite first attains this false and spurious hope, is by mistakes about the spiritual rigour and strictness of the gospel. God at first gave man a righteous law, and entered with him into a covenant of works. According to the tenor of which covenant, the law required exact obedience, universal holiness, and perfection : and this in the greatest rigour, not admitting any grains of allowance for the least defect or deviation. But man having sinned, and thereby broken this covenant, "the law became weak through sin;" that is, weak and unable to justify, and powerful only to condemn : so that now all legal dispensations are dispensations of terror ; and to tell sinners of the law, is only in another word to tell them of the curse. Hereupon God was pleased to introduce a new covenant, and instead of works to establish our salvation upon a law of faith, as it is in Rom. iii. 57. So that no breach of the law whatsoever should be able to condemn him that believes.

Now the hypocrite seeing this, and reflecting upon the former unsupportable severity of the law, he naturally dashes upon the other extreme, and thinks that if the law were all justice, then certainly the gospel must be all mercy, without justice. Thus making it so the law of liberty, as not of duty ; and getting a full liberty, or rather licentiousness of conscience, together with a plentiful stock of faith without good works, he looks upon himself as perfect and evangelical : and henceforward in the business of justification, but to think any more of a holy life, he calls it (as the phrase of some is) a returning to Egypt. And therefore as for duty, obedience, and such other legal things, they must belong only to moral men, who are not acquainted with this sublime mystery of the gospel.

Hereupon, having made so fair a progress, he proceeds further, and proposes to himself the gospel, as it is held forth in the most lax and favourable expressions, in some scriptures, which he first misunderstands, and then draws to his own purpose.

As for instance, that in 2 Cor. viii. 12, where God is said to accept the will for the deed. From whence, though he lives in a continual omission of known duties, and a frequent commission of known sins; yet he will comfort himself in this, that his heart is good, that he means well, that his will is upright; and God accepts of this as well as the strictest obedience. But to rectify so perverse a mistake, such a one must know that God never accepts the will for the deed, where he puts it into a man's power to do as well as to will: but this holds only where a man is disabled from the performance of his duty, in which case the inward sincerity of the will supplies the want of the outward action. As for instance, it is a man's duty both to frequent the public worship of God, and to worship him in private with the humblest postures of body, as kneeling and the like; but if God casts him upon his bed of sickness, and the man is not able to stir a hand or a foot, there is no doubt but God accepts of his desire to do these outward acts of reverence as much as if he actually did them. And if a man would receive the blessed sacrament, but is in a place where he cannot have it administered to him, it is as little to be questioned but that God accepts the devout pantings and breathings of his soul after that heavenly ordinance, as much as if he were really a partaker of it in the outward elements. But what is this to the hypocrite's case, who pretends will in contradiction to practice, when both are in his power? thus deluding himself and abusing the grace of God, and withal not considering, that such kind of expressions as this, that God accepts the will for the deed, and the like, are not proposed to us as the standing rules of our obedience, in our ordinary Christian course, but as special arguments of comfort in cases of extraordinary distress: not as our spiritual diet to feed and to sustain, but as cordials to recover us.

Again, when the hypocrite reads in Rom. x. 9, that "whosoever shall confess with his mouth, and believe with his heart, that God hath raised Christ from the dead, shall be saved;" he finds that it is no hard matter to own such a belief and profession, to carry the name and wear the colours of Christ, and so long he concludes that this scripture warrants his salvation. And again, 1 John ii. 1, "If any one sin, we have an advocate with the Father." Hence with much confidence he can cast all his sins upon Christ's intercession; and though he continues to sin, yet as long as Christ continues to intercede, he doubts not but the interest of his soul stands sure. Now these scriptures, with many others, being improved by a subtle, crafty, self-deceiving

head, and a wicked, unsanctified heart, lay the foundation of all the hypocrite's hope. But if he would undeceive himself, and consider that obedience is still necessary, and that Christ "came not to destroy, but to establish the law," as the rule of that obedience; that he came not to give any new law (as Socinus and his school would have it), but to vindicate and clear the old in its just purity and extent; I say, the thought of this would make him begin to question the soundness of his hope, and try the foundation before he finished the superstructure.

Christ's yoke is indeed easy, but it is still a yoke; and his burden is light, but it is still a burden, and will be so as long as we carry flesh and blood, and a body of sin about us. That one gospel precept of self-denial seriously considered, how difficult it is to our corrupt nature, how contrary to our most native inclinations, would make the hypocrite confess, that notwithstanding all these gracious concessions and abatements of legal rigour, that shine forth upon mankind in the gospel, he must yet be forced to purchase heaven and happiness at a far higher rate than he did imagine.

4. The fourth and last way that I shall mention, by which the hypocrite attains his false hope, is by his mistakes about repentance, faith, and conversion. And it is not to be questioned, but that mistakes about these have been the deplorable cause of the ruin of many thousands: for, as Quintilian says of eloquence, *Multi ad eloquentiam pervenire potuissent, nisi se jam pervenisse putassent*; so many, in all probability, might have attained to repentance, but that they thought they had repented already; many might have believed and been converted, had they not preferred speed before certainty, and too erroneously and hastily presumed upon these works, before they were ever thoroughly wrought upon them.

The carnal hypocrite is apt to think every fit of sorrow for sin, every grumbling of natural conscience, to be repentance; and therefore here he rests, thinking his sorrow to have atoned his sin, and his tears to have washed away his impurities: not considering the great and vast difference that is between *μεταμέλεισθαι* and *μετανοεῖν*; between a bare regret and anguish for sin, causing the soul to wish only that it had not been committed, and between such a sorrow as is attended with a total change and renovation of the heart. The first may proceed from the principles of nature awakened, and so is common to those that finally perish and prove castaways; the latter is a product of the special working of God's Spirit infusing grace into the soul, and therefore peculiar only to believers. Now, if the hypocrite would warily observe, whether the sorrow he so much trusts in did ever yet cleanse his heart, so as to turn the full bent and propensity of it to the commands of God, he would find little cause for hope, and see that his very repentance was to be re-

pented of; and that all his penitential showers were like the rain upon the streets, that does not cleanse, but foul the ways.

Also for conversion: if the hypocrite can strain his heart so high as to relinquish some sins, to make some confession, and to engage in some brittle, uncertain promises of future amendment, he imagines now that the great work has passed upon him, and that he is taken from the portion of sinners to the privilege of saints. But if he would impartially read his own case in the examples of others, and see Judas confessing his sin, and that with much bitterness, and yet for all that a "son of perdition;" if he would view Herod doing many things upon John's preaching, and yet continuing an unconverted, bloody Herod still; if he would consider Agrippa in the very borders of conversion, and almost become a Christian, and yet for all that never converted, nor made a Christian; he would find just cause to change his hopes into fears; and, instead of being confident of this work, with much humility and trembling to seek after it.

And then lastly, for that grand deciding work of faith: because the hypocrite, by a blind, irrational boldness, is confident that Christ will save him, and redeem him from God's wrath; therefore he thinks that he believes, and that he relies and depends upon Christ; but if he would examine his faith by these interrogatories; as, 1st. Whether or no he has overcome the world? for every believer does so; 1 John v. 4. He triumphs over Satan, he conquers his corruptions, and repels temptations. And, 2dly. Whether he can say, not only that he does not sin, but that he cannot sin? not that he cannot commit, but that he cannot approve or delight in sin; and that he never sins with such a full consent of will, but that it is still with some secret reluctancy and remorse of the renewed principle: every true believer is able to say so, as is evident from 1 John iii. 9, "Who-soever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." It is as impossible for the spiritual man to relish sin, as it is for the natural man to feed upon stones or dirt. Now, I say, if the hypocrite would bring his faith to the test of these questions, and let his conscience truly and fairly return an answer, he would find that there is as great a difference between a well-grounded gospel-hope, and his hope, as there is between believing and presuming.

This therefore is the fourth way, by which the hypocrite procures his hope: he reads that those who repent, believe, and are converted, shall be saved; and hereupon he remembers, that he has been sometimes troubled about sin, and this he calls repentance. Also he finds himself full of confidence, that Christ will undertake for his salvation, and this he persuades himself is faith. And lastly, he finds that there is some outward change made in his life; some duties performed that were before neglected, and



some sins avoided ~~the~~ before committed; and this he styles conversion. And ~~this~~ is the whole stock upon which the hypocrite trades to ~~secure~~ himself some ~~hope of~~ eternal happiness.

And now, to make some use and improvement of what has hitherto been delivered: if in this grand business of salvation, the hypocrite may and does entertain a hope, then let none, from the confidence of their hopes, conclude that they are not hypocrites; but consider at least, if not suspect the safety of their condition. It is indeed the custom of some to put the superstructure in the room of the foundation, and first of all to urge assurance; but such persons measure their safety by their confidence, and so may very fitly have that speech of Solomon applied to them in a spiritual sense, in Prov. xiv. 16, "The fool rageth, and is confident:" for certainly where the venture is of eternity, the greatest caution is the best security. The apostle indeed says, in Rom. xiv. 23, that "he that doubteth is damned:" but this is quite upon another occasion; and I am afraid that it will one day be found, that many have been and shall be damned, because they never doubted. For since there are so many ways for a man to delude himself about his spiritual estate, since hypocrisy is so connatural to us, and the heart not only easy, but willing; and not only willing, but also industrious to cheat itself into such a vain hope; can there be any thing more seasonable and rational, than to caution such as think they stand, to beware lest they fall, and still to fear that that hope is scarce sure enough, that can never be too sure?

And thus to persuade doubting is not to persuade scepticism in religious matters; for scepticism is properly a doubting of the truth of universals, and of the articles of religion; but the doubting here spoken of is concerning the safety of a man's own particular condition: nay, this doubting presupposes a certain assent to the former; for if a man were not persuaded of the general truth of religion, he would never doubt or be solicitous about his own personal concern in it. This doubting therefore is so far from weakening, that it does indeed establish our hope: for as it is said of knowledge, *Firmissimam esse scientiam quæ oritur ex dubitatione*; so the same may be said of our hopes of future happiness, that those are the most sure and rational, that were first ushered in with doubting and distrust. I say distrust, not of God, but of ourselves; for this kind of doubting causes trial, and trial produces knowledge, and knowledge brings assurance, and assurance so obtained maketh not ashamed.

He that shall observe what the scripture says of the deep, unconceivable treachery of man's heart, will have sufficient warrant from thence to bid the most holy in appearance suspect his condition. Let none say that he was converted so many years since, and that therefore, though he knows himself under the

present power of some sin, yet his hopes of heaven stand sure and good, in the strength of that his former conversion ; but let him consider rather, how easy it is for a man to think that he is converted, when he is yet in the very gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity ; and to take that for assurance, that it is only self-flattery, and to think that he has a lively faith, and a lasting hope, which yet being spurious and unsound, will one day miserably deceive him ? and, having raised him up to heaven, leave him in the lowest regions of hell : much like the flattering disappointment of the hungry man's dream in Isaiah xxix. 8, "The hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth ; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty." This know for certain, that the only way for a man to make his hopes sure and lasting is to be sincere ; and the next way to attain sincerity, is first thoroughly to know and understand his hypocrisy.

And thus much concerning the second thing proposed, which was, to show by what means the hypocrite takes his first rise, and how he gets and obtains this hope. The third and last will be to show how he maintains and preserves it.

## SERMON XIV.

### PART II.

#### THE HOPE OF THE HYPOCRITE DELUSIVE.

#### JOB VIII. 13.

*The hypocrite's hope shall perish.*

I FORMERLY made an entrance upon these words, in which, after some brief explication of the terms, I showed that they naturally cast themselves into these two propositions :

First, That even a hypocrite may proceed so far as to entertain hopes and expectations of a future happiness.

Secondly, That the hypocrite's fairest and most promising expectation of a future blessedness, would in the end vanish into miserable disappointment.

For the first of these, I cast the prosecution of it under these three heads.

I. To prove that a hypocrite may and does entertain such hopes.

II. To show by what ways and means he comes first to obtain them.

III. And lastly, to show how he continues and preserves them.

For the first ; that *a hypocrite may and does entertain such hopes* : I proved it by two reasons, the first of which was taken from the nature of man's mind, which was vehement and restless in its pursuit after a suitable good, and accordingly was put to seek out for a good that might bear proportion to both its conditions : that is, both a present and a future : and a present good it takes in by actual possession, and a future only by its hopes.

The second reason was taken from that peace and tranquillity of mind that even hypocrites enjoy : which are the certain effects, and therefore the infallible signs of some hope abiding in the mind.

As for the next thing, which was *to show by what ways and means the hypocrite comes first to obtain this hope* : I mentioned four.

1. By his misunderstanding of God, especially in his two

great attributes, his justice and his mercy. 2. His misapprehending of sin. 3. By his ignorance of the spiritual rigour and strictness of the gospel. And 4. By his mistakes about the nature of repentance, faith, and conversion.

These things I then insisted upon at large, and so far I have gone; and I shall not prevent myself in what remains by any further repetitions; but shall now proceed to

III. The third and last thing proposed for the prosecution of the first proposition, which was to show *by what ways and means the hypocrite preserves and continues this false hope*. And here we must observe, that those methods by which he first gets it, have in them also a natural fitness to continue, cherish, and foment it: the same thing being usually the producing and the preserving cause; as the parent that begot the child will also foster and maintain it.

But I shall instance in three ways more especially, by which the hypocrite keeps up and continues those hopes, which upon the former false grounds he took up.

1. The first is, by keeping up a course of external obedience, and abstaining from gross, scandalous sins. Now the hypocrite's confidence having no reality or ground in being, but only an imaginary foundation in his own apprehensions, it concerns him by all means to keep fair with conscience; forasmuch as that has the keeping of, and the power over all his contents. And it is withal of a lively, active nature, apt to discern sin, and apt to pursue and vex the soul for it; it will be flying in a man's face, if not pacified, or at least deluded by some seeming pursuit of religion. It is to the soul as the disease called the wolf to the body, if it be not continually fed, it will gnaw and prey upon the body itself, devour and consume the flesh. So if conscience be not gratified by some outward services, it will recoil upon the soul, and with much rage and bitterness torment and feed upon that.

Wherefore the hypocrite, that his conscience may not pass the condemning sentence upon him, will be often bribing it with some specious outward performances; and that he may pacify it, his chief work and business must be to possess it with this persuasion, that he is in a state of grace: which being that which the scripture in other words calls *spiritual life*, it does by consequence imply in it two things; first, the principle and fountain of this life, which is faith: and this the hypocrite thinks himself endowed with, from his forementioned mistakes about conversion. The second is the acting and exercise of this principle, which is called *gospel obedience*; and of this the hypocrite must endeavour to assure himself by his behaviour, in the continued track and course of his life. Hereupon he is careful to conform himself to the exact letter of the law, and not to pursue those practices that

carry in them an open, barefaced opposition to it. And so long as he does this, his conscience is silent, and his hope continues.

The young man in the gospel was a pregnant instance of this, who, reflecting upon his strict and unblameable conversation, according to the several precepts of the law, vaunted himself in that confident reply to Christ in Matt. xix. 20, "All these things have I kept from my youth." See St. Paul also before his conversion : questionless his hopes of heaven were as full and fair, as large and promising as his heart could desire, and the foundation of them all (as we may collect from his own writings) was only his external conformity to the words of the law. Phil. iii. 6, "Touching the righteousness" (says he) "that is in the law, I was blameless." That is, according to the doctrine of the Pharisees, of which sect he was, he placed a legal righteousness in abstaining from those external commissions of sin, that were prohibited in the letter of the law, and in the performance of those outward acts of duty that were there enjoined : whereupon, leading his conversation in an accurate observance of the outward letter, he pronounces himself blameless ; and therefore doubtless, while he thought himself thus blameless, he had all those hopes of happiness that it is natural for a person, that thinks himself blameless, to entertain. And that he gathered this opinion of himself and of his condition only from his fulfilling the outward letter, without insisting upon the inward, spiritual, stricter part of it, is clear and manifest from Rom. vii. 7, "I had not known sin," says he, "but by the law : for I had not known lust, unless the law had said, Thou shall not covet." In which words he considers the law not barely according to the letter, but according to the spiritual scope and intention of it : and though the law taken in the former sense did acquit and absolve, yet in this latter sense it did condemn him. And the reason is, because the law considered in the letter did only regulate external actions ; but thus considered, it was a searcher into, and "a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart ;" and consequently did arraign the very desires of sin, the first risings and movings of concupiscence.

Now that this external obedience to the law, and refraining from gross notorious sins, is a singular preservative of the hypocrite's hope, and a strong maintainer of his confidence, as it has been sufficiently proved by these scripture instances : so the same is yet further manifest, from that strange method that God has sometimes used for the conversion of formal hypocrites. He has let them fall into some gross, open, scandalous sin, the cry of which has exceedingly troubled and disquieted them, and beat them out of all those refuges of hope, which the former civility of their conversation has afforded them. Whereupon, being utterly bereaved of their confidence, God has taken this occasion to let into their hearts a full sense of all their sins, even so far as to discover and rip open to them their sinful nature, their original corruption, and thereby to convert and cause them to repair to Christ, and

by a lively faith cast all their hopes upon his satisfaction. And no doubt, but it was upon this account that our Saviour said, that the publicans and harlots, persons of scandalous lives and prostitute reputations, yet went to heaven sooner than those glorious but rotten counterfeits, the scribes and pharisees. This therefore is the first way by which the hypocrite continues and preserves his false hope, viz. by the civility and outwardly blameless carriage of his conversation.

2. The second way by which the hypocrite keeps up his hopes, and maintains the good opinion he has conceived of his spiritual estate, is by comparing himself with others, who are openly vicious, and apparently worse than himself. There is no way more effectual for a man to argue himself into a delusion. It is an easy matter to enhance our apprehensions of the value of any thing, while there is a worse in our view. Clipped money may be accounted good, if compared to counterfeit. The hypocrite thinks himself religious, not from any goodness of his own, but from the badness of others. He raises a structure of reputed holiness upon the deplorable ruins of other men's, and so entertains both hope and comfort, not upon judgment, but comparison. But as in other things comparisons are justly accounted odious, so here they are dangerous and pernicious. For it is this that makes him overrate his condition, and set that price upon it, that God will never come up to. This makes him overvalue his own estate, and despise others; while he should pity and lament theirs, and amend his own.

This was the chief ground of the pharisee's hope and confidence, "that he was not as other men;" an adulterer, covetous, swearer, or the like. When he sees the enormous intemperance of the drunkard, and compares it with his own strictness, he blesses himself with all the promises and assurances of heaven, because he sees the other directly posting to hell. When he sees the open profaneness of some, then he reflects on his own religious duties and fastings, and so by a fallacious comparison concludes himself happy, because he sees another very miserable. He does not measure the holiness of his actions by their conformity to the law of God, but by their unconformity to the actions of others. In short, the hypocrite could never with any colour of confidence think himself holy, if others were not exceeding wicked.

But he that is apt to overvalue himself upon such deceiving grounds, and to owe his perfection not to any worth of his own, but to a foil, should consider that sin admits of a large latitude of degrees, the least of which will ruin and condemn as surely, though not so deeply, as the greatest; and withal, that there are as many degrees of sinners as of sins. There are many paths in the broad way, some of which are more cleanly, some more foul; yet they all tend to the same end; and those shall in the issue

as certainly arrive at hell, that tread the cleanlier paths of a refined hypocrisy, as those that trash through the mire and dirt of the grossest abominations. And therefore let not the hypocrite think himself in a good condition, because others are in a worse; let him not compare his life to theirs, but let him rather bring and compare it "to the law and to the testimony," and there he shall read the vanity of his hopes, the deplorable defects of his most exact righteousness, and find that it is infinitely more below the perfect purity required in God's commands, than it is above the foulest practices of the most scandalous, shameless transgressors.

3. The third way by which the hypocrite keeps up and maintains his hopes, is by forbearing to make a strict and impartial trial of his estate. That which first raised his hope, I show, was ignorance; and that which continues and fomented ignorance, is want of self-trial. He that would thoroughly understand himself, must first thoroughly try himself. For it is this that dives into the retired depths of a deceitful heart, that does, as it were, sift and winnow the soul, and singles out the precious from the vile, that before lay in a confused heap, and placing them under a distinct view of the judgment, give it a full and a clear prospect into them.

No wonder if the hypocrite discerns not his condition, when he never turns his eyes inwards by a thorough faithful examination. For as in a trade, a man may go on and traffic, thinking himself to be rich, when indeed he is poor and near breaking, only because he does not examine his stock, nor take a survey of his accounts; so is it in the hypocrite's profession of religion, he proceeds in it, and thinks himself in a thriving condition, while in the mean time he withers and decays, and is "near to cursing:" and all this befalls him because he considers not whether he has a sufficient stock of grace to carry him through his Christian profession. A man must descend into himself, and retreat into his own bosom by a severe inquiry, or live and die a stranger to his spiritual estate, and at as great a distance from his own heart as that is from a sure peace. We know how apt every man is to think his case good, and such as will abide the law, till the weakness of it be made manifest in the trial. "The rich man," says Solomon, "is wise in his own conceit: but he that has understanding searches him out." And so may it be said of the hypocrite, that he conceits himself holy and happy, and in a state of grace and favour with God, till such time as an awakened conscience searches him out, and discovers to him the vanity of his groundless imaginations.

The foulest soul may think itself fair and beautiful, till it comes to view its deformity in the glass of God's word. No man can discover the depth and danger of his spiritual wounds, but by searching them. But it is not to be wondered, that a

hypocrite is so fearful to engage in this work, for he has a shrewd suspicion that it will overthrow and put an end to all his comforts: and every man is naturally averse from seeking after that which he is unwilling to find. He that would fain be holy, will hardly be brought to set about that duty, that will certainly convince him of his unholiness. But how irksome and unpleasant soever this work is, the hypocrite must know that it comes authorized both with God's counsel and command: and I shall here add only this argument to enforce this duty upon him, that if his hopes and confidence will not abide the examination of his own conscience, he must not expect that they should ever endure the trial of God's tribunal.

And thus much for the third way or means by which the hypocrite continues and preserves his false hope; which was the last thing proposed for the prosecution of the first proposition: I proceed now to the

Second, viz. That the hypocrite's fairest and most promising expectation of a future happiness will in the end vanish into miserable disappointment.

For the prosecution of which, I shall,

I. Prove the proposition, and show that the hypocrite's hope and expectation of a future happiness will perish and be disappointed.

II. I shall show those critical seasons and turns, in which more especially the hypocrite's hope will be sure to fail him.

III. And lastly, make some application of the whole.

I. For the first of these, I shall prove the proposition two ways.

1. From clear testimony of scripture. And here, though the text itself be sufficient to prove the doctrine drawn from it, this being only a variation of that into other words; yet, for the more clear and evident illustration of the truth in hand, we will take in also the suffrages of other scriptures. And first, in this very chapter we have seen the hypocrite's hope compared to flags and rushes, which in their most flourishing condition are not far from fading: but while they have one part in the spring, have another usually in the fall. To-day they are fresh and verdant, to-morrow they wither and die, and are cast into the oven: you may spare the sickle, they will droop and fall of themselves. And in the 14th verse of this 8th chapter of Job, we have the hypocrite's hope compared to a spider's web; a similitude of great elegance and significance, and we may observe a great analogy between the spider's web and that in a double respect. 1st. In respect of the curious subtilty and the fine artificial composure of it. The spider in every web shows itself an artist; so the hypocrite spins his hope with a great deal of art, in a thin, fine thread.



This and that good duty, this good thought, this opposing of some gross sin, are all interwoven together, to the making up a covering for his hypocrisy. And as the spider draws all out of its own bowels, so the hypocrite weaves all his confidence out of his own inventions and imaginations. 2dly. It resembles it in respect of its weakness; it is too fine spun to be strong. After the spider has used all its art and labour in framing a web, yet how easily is it broken, how quickly is it swept down! So after the hypocrite has wrought out a hope with much cost, art, and industry, it is yet but a weak, slender, pitiful thing. He does indeed by this get some name and room amongst professors; he does, as it were, hang his hopes upon the beams of God's house. But when God shall come to cleanse, and, as it were, to sweep his sanctuary, such cobwebs are sure to be fetched down. Thus the hypocrite, like the spider, by all his artifice and labour only disfigures God's house. A hypocrite in a church is like a cobweb in a palace: all that he is or does serving only to annoy and misbecome the place and station that he would adorn.

Sundry other scripture expressions there are, that cast much light and evidence upon this truth; as in Job xx. 5, "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment." The hypocrite takes a great deal of pains, and by much ado pieces up his broken evidences for heaven, bolsters up his decaying hopes, and by many shifts keeps up a contented heart for the time of a transitory life. But, alas! what is hope lengthened out for a few moments to an eternity of despair! when he shall be swallowed up in that black abyss of darkness and despondency, from whence he shall never enjoy the least glimmering hope of an after-delivery. Could he prolong his hopes beyond the years of Methuselah, yet all these together, put into the balance with perpetuity, are but as a moment, as an instant that vanishes as soon as present. Hence in Job xiii. 16, Job making mention of God says, that "the hypocrite shall not come before him." Such a one indeed, while he jogs on in a formal, seemingly pious course, may think that every step sets him nearer and nearer to God; but it is with him here, as with a man out of his way, the further and faster he goes, the wider he is from his intended journey's end. Again, in Job xxvii. 8, there is a pathetic interrogation made; "What is the hope of the hypocrite, when God taketh away his soul?" A sad exchange certainly! But that which begins in vanity must needs determine in vexation of spirit, horror of conscience, and eternal confusion. And to show yet further how contemptible and vain a thing it is, we have the wise man emphatically comparing it to a candle, in Prov. xxiv. 20, where he tells us, that "the candle of the wicked shall be put out." And what is a lamp or candle, but a diminutive, dwindling, contracted light at best? made only to measure out a few moments, and to burn for a little time, both shining and

spending itself at once : so that, although it should not be blown out or extinguished by any violent accident, yet it would at length go out of its own accord, and that with an offensive farewell too left behind. In like manner, though God should not, by any severe and boisterous dispensation of judgments, forcibly rend and tear the hypocrite's hope out of his heart ; yet through its own native weakness, having lasted its term, and, like a lamp or candle, having consumed its little stock, it must die, and sink, and drop away of itself. In short, we have Christ's own word, assuring us that it cannot last, in Matt. xv. 13 ; " Every plant," says he, " that my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." But the hypocrite's hope is a slip of his own planting, of his own watering and dressing ; and therefore, when God shall come to purge his garden, such weeds and nuisances are sure to be cast out. Thus we see the whole current of the scriptures directly set against the hypocrite's confidence ; we may read its doom almost in every page and period of God's word : so that if this be certain, that the word of God shall stand and abide, then this must be also as certain, that " the hypocrite's hope shall perish."

2. That the hypocrite's hope of future happiness shall assuredly perish, may be proved from the weakness of the foundation upon which it is built. And we know, that in all buildings, if this be rotten, the superstructure cannot be lasting ; if the supporters reel, that which is supported must needs shake. I have already shown that ignorance and misapprehension were the grounds upon which the hypocrite's fairest confidences were raised, and the only pillars upon which they were borne up : and can we imagine that errors and mistakes are such foundations, as to rear upon them a hope that must stand and last to eternity ? I have made it appear that all the hypocrite's hopes are taken up from erroneous, mistaken conceptions of God, of sin, of the gospel, and of repentance, faith, and conversion. And are these, think we, likely to bear him out ? Because the hypocrite builds an unreasonable, presumptuous confidence upon God's mercy, do we think that this will secure him from the dreadful blow of his justice ? Because the hypocrite never truly apprehended sin, will it therefore follow that he shall never smart for sin ? Will shutting our eyes against a danger secure us from it ? Because the gospel, through the deceit of his ignorant mind, seems to favour and release him from duty, will this warrant him in the neglect of it ? Will ignorance of the spirituality and strictness of the gospel discharge him from the curse of the law ? Or because he falsely thinks he has repented, will this entitle him to the privileges of the penitent ? Because he mistakes the nature of faith, shall he therefore inherit the portion of believers ? Thus we see how the whole fabric of his hope bears upon the false and treacherous bottom of ignorance and mistake, which support and hold together all the parts and parcels of it.

And as ignorance is one of its main foundations, so it equally rests upon another altogether as weak and as uncertain; which is self-love. For as wicked and as confident as such persons are, they are yet afraid to be damned; and therefore they are willing to believe that they shall not. And howsoever they live here, they are very desirous to be happy hereafter; and therefore, they find their hearts very prone to be persuaded that they shall be so. For I challenge the most confident and improved hypocrite in the world to show any other ground for his hope of ever coming to heaven, but only because he thinks so, and because he would have it so. But can bare thought or desire alter the reality and state of things? Well, therefore, may we conclude, that that which is founded only upon ignorance and self-love, must needs end in disappointment and shame. And thus much for the first thing, which was the proof of the proposition: I proceed now to

II. The second, which is to show *what are those critical seasons and turns, in which more especially the hypocrite's hope will be sure to fail him.* I shall mention two.

1. The first is in the time of some heart-breaking, discouraging judgment from God. And here we must know that the hypocrite has two supports upon which jointly he casts the whole burden of his spiritual estate; namely, his hope in God, and his enjoyment of the creature. With the former he quiets his conscience, with the latter he comforts his heart. For whatsoever he pretends, and howsoever he seems to place all his expectations above; yet he draws all his content, his delight and satisfaction, from the world. Like a tree, though he seems to flourish upwards and rise towards heaven, yet his root is in the ground, and he lives from beneath. He cannot place his joys entirely in God, but he must have something else besides. Ananias and Sapphira will cast in their estate into the common stock of the church; but the public faith will not satisfy them, unless they reserve a secret portion to themselves. The hypocrite cannot hope for another world any longer than he enjoys this. Wherefore when God strips him of all his temporals, then he is utterly cast down, his heart breaks, his hope fails, and his confidence of future happiness vanishes before his present afflictions. He can look up to heaven no longer than he stands firm upon the earth. Had Job been a hypocrite when he was brought so low, and utterly spoiled of all earthly comforts, no former hope he had in God could have kept him from following his wife's advice; but he would have been ready to curse God, and spit the venom of his discontented heart in his face, though he died for it. No hypocrite is so far of Job's temper as to be able at the same time to hold fast his hopes, and to "embrace a dunghill," and (according to his phrase) to "trust in God

though he kills him." He cannot heartily call God father, while he whips and chastises him.

Hence Job clears himself of hypocrisy by this notable question, Job xxvii. 10, "Will the hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty?" God indeed is usually made the prop of his presumption, but never the object of his delight. He never attains to those well-tempered, durable, victorious hopes of the righteous, so excellently set forth in Hab. iii. 17, 18, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, and the labour of the olive shall fail; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation." No, the hypocrite's hope and joy is quite of another make and mould. He finds no taste or relish in celestial joys, abstracted from the plenties and jollities of the world. He finds no feast in a good conscience, any longer than he sits down to a full table. Come to such a one while he is flushed in honour, strong in interest, and all things flow in full and fair to his ambition, and what devout discourses shall you hear from him, especially after a large meal; and what contempt of the world, and affiance in God, as if his heart were already lodged in Abraham's bosom! But let God once put forth his hand and touch him in his beloved name or interest, toss him upon the tongues of his enemies, and lay him low in contempt and disgrace; and then come to him, and see whether he can now live upon his former talk, and support his spirits, with those glorious pretences he used to flourish his discourse with, in the midst of his former affluence. No; the case is quite altered, and you shall find him a pitiful, abject, dispirited lump of clay: pale and whining, and creeping into every company to tell doleful stories of himself and his sufferings. Or, as the prophet Isaiah, li. 20, much better expresses it; you will find him "like a wild bull in a net;" tumbling and tossing, hampered and impatient, and fit for nothing but to let the world see the strange and ugly difference between the way and postures of a hypocrite in a prosperous and in a calamitous condition. It is clear, therefore, that in the time of such severe judgments, the hypocrite's confidence leaves him, deserts and utterly fails him: for he cannot hold his hope in one hand, unless he grasps the world in the other.

2. The other season in which the hypocrite's hope will be sure to fail and to forsake him, is at the time of death. Although he has by many arts and shifts prolonged his confidence hitherto, yet this hour will put a period both to his life and his expectations at once: for the hypocrite's hope is but an annuity at the best, he has it but for term of life at the longest. When a few days in the flesh shall be passed, he must be forced to lie down, and breathe out his soul and his hopes together. And though it might be said of him, that as long as there was life there was hope; as long as his body breathed, his soul hoped; yet at this time that saying of the psalmist must pass upon him,

Psalm cxlvi. 4, "His breath goes forth, he returneth to his earth, and in that very day all his thoughts perish." All his fond expectations shall then upbraid him to his face; Satan, his greatest flatterer, shall then laugh him to scorn; death shall confute all his confidences, and hell convince him that his hopes of heaven were groundless and irrational. He now steps out of an old world, and finds that old things are passed away, and all things presented to him in a new state and dress: his old thoughts, his old reasonings, hopes, and confidences vanish, and he has new apprehensions of God, new conceptions of the nature of sin, and of his own state and condition.

For as soon as the soul is once dislodged from the body, it is also freed from many causes of ignorance and deception that did encumber it in that estate; so that now its reason is quicker, and its discernment clearer, both to perceive other things, and thoroughly to reflect upon itself. It now spies out all the flaws and fallacies of its former fair but deceiving hopes; it sees the non-concludency of those arguments that it rested upon before. Death, as it shuts our bodily eyes, so it opens and enlarges our spiritual. One moment after death shall discover the errors of many ages: for the time of this life is a time in which all things are, as it were, huddled up in a kind of mixture and confusion. The righteous own and profess Christ, and so do the hypocrites; the righteous have their hopes, and so have they; and both of them live, and act, and are supported by their hopes; and as to any outward appearance, we cannot discriminate the unsound from the sincere. But when death comes, that divides them by an open and a manifest distinction; the hope of the righteous is crowned, and the hope of the wicked is confounded: a line of eternal separation is then drawn between them; the hypocrite must then let go his hold, bid an everlasting farewell to all his comforts, renounce his usurped confidence, and take up his portion in those mansions of endless despair, where he shall have abundant cause to wish, but no grounds to hope for the least redemption.

And thus much for the second thing proposed; which was, to show those critical seasons and turns, in which more especially the hypocrite's hope will be sure to fail him. I come now to

III. The third and last thing, which is to *make some use and improvement of the whole foregoing discourse*. And it shall be to display and set before us the transcendent, surpassing misery of the final estate of all hypocrites; whose peculiar lot it is, not only to be damned, but what is infinitely more, to hope themselves into damnation, and to perish with those circumstances that shall double and treble the weight of their destruction. Hope is the last refuge and retreat of an afflicted soul, the last support of a sinking mind. And in this life the heart of man is

not capable of such absolute, entire misery, but that some glimmerings of hope will still dart in upon him, and buoy up his spirits from an utter despondency. But when it shall come to this, that a man must go one way, and his hopes another, so parting as never to meet again, human nature admits not of any further addition to its sorrow; for it is pure, perfect, unmixed misery, without any alloy or mitigation. The strongest affections and the greatest hopes, if not answered, do of necessity leave behind them the quickest pain: for if, as the wise man says in Prov. xiii. 12, "hope only deferred be so grievous," what then must be hope utterly disappointed? If delay be so irksome, what then must be total frustration? Nothing is more contrary and tormenting to the nature of man, than to be degraded; to be low is sad, but to be brought low is much worse. Poverty is troublesome, but poverty after riches is insupportable. Former happiness is the greatest ingredient of present misery: for look what comfort springs from past sorrows heretofore endured, the same degree of misery arises from past happiness heretofore enjoyed. In Lam. i. 7, it is represented as the height and sting of the calamity of Judah, that "in the day of her affliction, and of her misery, she remembered all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old." It would be some relief to a condemned sinner, if with the loss of his hope he could lose his memory too: but alas! when he shall lie down in sorrow and torment, this will recall to his mind all that peace, comfort, and tranquillity that his false hopes formerly fed him with, and then force him to write this emphatical character of misery upon all: Thus and thus I was; these things I did enjoy. No voice will be heard in hell so loud and frequent as this sad and doleful one, My hopes deceived me, my confidences deluded me. And, believe it, this will make it ten times more hell, than the "wailing and gnashing of teeth," and all the other torments of it put together.

For take the case in a similitude: when a poor traveller, disheartened with bad ways and weather turmoiling him, and fear of thieves besetting him, shall yet comfort himself with this thought, that when he comes to his journey's end he will refresh himself at his inn; and as soon as ever he comes thither, he is set upon, stabbed, and cruelly murdered: does not such a one, think we, die with a strange horror and surprise? So the hypocrite cannot pass the stage of this world, but he will meet with many crosses and discouragements, under which he is apt to think, through the flattery of his hopes, that he shall find an end of all these sorrows in another world. But then, alas! they chiefly begin; then he enters upon them in their height, fulness, and perfection. Hopes of heaven, therefore, by those that either tender their own happiness, or dread the extremity of misery, are to be entertained warily; for if they are not genuine, and of the right stamp, they will only end in a

greater load of sorrow and confusion. They may indeed for a little time support and keep us up in this world: just as a man's clothes, when he falls into the water, will for a while hold him up from sinking; but when they are once thoroughly wet and heavy, then they drown and sink him so much the faster and deeper.

This we may observe, that those appetites and desires, the satisfaction of which brings the greatest delight; the defrauding or disappointment of them, according to the rule of contraries, brings the greatest and the sharpest misery. Now a strong hope, suitably and luckily answered, comes, as it were, rushing into the heart with a fulness of content; it bears in upon it like a favorable wished-for wind upon a spread sail. It is, according to Solomon's expression, "health to the navel, and marrow to the bones." Satisfaction added to a longing expectation, is like a refreshing shower upon a dry, gaping, thirsty ground. Nothing so comfortable as hope crowned with fruition; nothing so tormenting as hope snapped off with disappointment and frustration. And were it lawful to wish an enemy completely miserable, I would wish that he might vehemently desire, and never enjoy; that he might strongly hope, and never obtain.

Now, from what has been delivered, I think we may truly conclude, that of the two, the despairing reprobate is happier than the hoping reprobate. They both indeed fall equally low; but then he that hopes has the greater fall, because he falls from the higher place. He that despairs goes to hell, but then he goes thither with expectation; though he is damned, yet he is not surprised: he has inured his heart to the flames, and has made those terrors familiar to him, by the continual horror of his meditation; so that when he dies, he passes but from one hell into another; and his actual damnation is not the beginning, but the carrying on of his former torment. In short, to express the wretchedness of the hypocrite's hope, I shall only add this, that certainly that must needs be exceeding dismal, in comparison of which despair is desirable.

And now, O God, thou that requirest truth in the inward parts, cleanse us inwardly and thoroughly from the leaven of hypocrisy: sanctify us by thy truth; thy word is truth; and let our obedience to thee, justify our hopes in thee, that so trusting in thee we may never be confounded.

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

## SERMON XV.

## PART I.

## THE DUTY OF RESIGNATION.

## PSALM XXXIX. 9.

*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth ; because thou didst it.*

IF we would give one general account of all the duties that are incumbent upon a Christian, we shall find them reducible to these three, *faith, obedience and patience* ; and the vital principle that animates and runs through them all is *submission*. Faith being a submission of our understanding to what God commands us to believe : obedience being a submission of our will to what God commands us to do : and lastly, patience being a submission of the whole man to what God commands us to suffer. Concerning which excellent virtue, glorious things are every where spoken, not only by the penmen of holy writ, but also by the sons of reason and philosophy : and great eulogies of it might be drawn from their writings and examples. But, as we need not, so we shall not seek for any beyond the compass of the church. And here we have this virtue represented to full, in that great hero in the ways of God, king David ; a person signalized with that eminent character, of being “the man after God’s own heart,” and therefore certainly a most fit example to make an impression upon ours.

It is impossible that a discourse of patience should ever be unseasonable : for to such as are in adversity it will be a cordial to support them ; and to such as are in prosperity it will be an amulet to preserve them. For since no mortal man can be so happy, as to hold his happiness by a lease for life, every Christian, even in the height of his enjoyments, ought in habit and disposition of mind, at least, to be a sufferer ; that is, to have cast his resolutions into such a well-ordered, confirmed posture, as no calamity, how sudden or great soever, shall be able to surprise or shock him, either in point of courage or submission. It is one of the arts of patience still to be beforehand with an affliction, and to expect that all times, which a man may endure at any ; and since the healthiest of men may be sick, it is but prudence, while they are well, to have a remedy about them.

In the text we have these two general parts.



First, David's submissive deportment under a sharp affliction, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth."

Secondly, The ground and reason of such his deportment, which was the procedure of that affliction from God; "I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it."

And thus, the words being a full lecture of patience, recommending it to us by a great pattern, and consequently being designed to argue us into an absolute submission to the divine will, in our most pressing and severe distresses, we shall endeavour the prosecution of them in these two following things.

I. In declaring the nature and measures of this submission. And,

II. In showing the reasons and arguments for it, as the suffering person stands related to God. And,

I. For *the nature of this submission*; which I shall declare,

1. Negatively, by showing wherein it does not consist; and,

2. Positively, by showing wherein it does.

1. As for the negative part, that we may distinguish this great virtue from all false and mistaken resemblances of it, we shall observe first of all, that this submission, or rather submissive frame of spirit, consists not in an utter insensibility of, or an unconcernment under an affliction. For God, who gave us a being, did therewithal give us a connate desire to a well being; which every affliction in some measure robs us of, and, as it were, rends away a piece of our happiness; the entireness of which consists, not only in a freedom from sin, but also from sorrow. It can be no man's duty to be above the laws of his creation, and to contradict his nature, by a senselessness in the midst of those sufferings which oppress it. We read in Ecclesiastes of "a time to mourn;" a time in which mourning is so peculiarly in season, so proper, and so decent, that the contrary is absurd and unnatural. God, who calls and commands us to sympathize with our friends in their distress, surely will not forbid us to sorrow for our own. It was noted for one of the most inhuman pieces of tyranny in a Roman emperor, that when he had cruelly put some to death, with a greater cruelty he forbade their relations to lament for them; thus, by the former act destroying the men; by the latter, humanity itself.

A pensive consideration therefore of the sharpness of an affliction does not at all lessen our submission to it: for God never heaps such loads of grief upon us, but that he still leaves us the relief and pleasure of weeping, the privilege of free vent of our sorrows. He never turns children of Abraham into stones; but whensoever he strikes, not only permits, but also commands us to feel the smart. And indeed, how could we evidence to the world a due sense of the favours and smiles of God, if we should not droop under his frowns? For to be asleep with Jonas,

while a tempest is rattling about our ears, is not submission, but stupidity. Nay, let me add this further, that there cannot be a more dreadful sign of a man left to himself, and hardened by God, than to be unconcerned in the midst of his afflictions. For he who is so, certainly incurs these two great and fatal evils :

(1.) That he robs God of that honour which he particularly designs to himself by that afflicting dispensation : for God requires that men should fear him for his judgments, as well as love him for his mercies ; and regard the strokes, as well as the other operations of his hands. Besides, that this insensible frame of spirit clearly frustrates another great end of these severities ; which is antecedently to fright and deter men from sin. For he who does not feel God when he strikes, will hardly fear him when he threatens.

(2.) Such a person, by such an insensibility, renders every affliction befalling him utterly useless to all spiritual purposes whatsoever. For his heart, like an anvil, by bearing many strokes, and feeling none, grows so much the harder by every blow. Afflictions are some of God's extraordinary ways of reclaiming sinners ; but can have no effect where they can imprint no sense. He that can overcome and digest his physic like his daily food, is not like to be purged or cured by it. In like manner, when God takes in hand the cure of an overgrown sinner, and to that purpose applies the corrosive of some afflicting providence, whether of poverty, banishment, or disgrace, to eat away his proud, dead flesh, and so to restore him sound ; if this man now can lightly pass over, outface, and wear off the sense of these severe applications, let him never expect any medicinal, healing virtue from them : but conclude with himself, that being too sturdy to feel God's rod, he is certainly too bad to be mended by it.

Let this therefore be fixed upon in the first place, that the submission here spoken of in the text is not a stupid indolence or insensibility under such calamities as God shall be pleased to bring upon us. Nor

Secondly, does this submission lay any restraint upon us, from praying against any calamity, either actually inflicted upon us, or as yet but approaching towards us. For to pray against such things is not only lawful, but indeed our duty ; forasmuch as God has commanded us to pray : and prayer ought to contain, not only a petition of things good and suitable, but also a deprecation of whatsoever is evil or noxious to us, as an integral part of it. For though possibly God may have designed to bring the evil we pray against upon us ; yet, till providence has decided this to be the will of God, by the event, we are, as much as in us lies, to prevent it by our prayers.

And the reason is, because though God's secret will and purpose be the rule of his own actions, yet his revealed will ought

to be the sole director of ours. And God has written this in large characters upon every heart, that we ought to preserve our being from whatsoever may annoy it, by all lawful means; and surely there is none more lawful or approved by God than prayer. We have an eminent instance of this in David, in 2 Sam. xii., who though he had received a special revelation from God himself, that his child should die, yet ceased not for a while to fast and pray, and importune God, that it might live: but when God took away the child, then presently he rose up, and turned his mourning for that into a submission to the hand that took it from him.

In this case therefore, we are not to inquire into the counsels of God, what he intends to do; it being impossible that they should be a rule for us to steer our course by, forasmuch as they are hidden and concealed from us; and it is implied in the very essence and nature of a rule, that it should be known. From whence it follows, that till we know that it is God's will to bring an affliction upon us, we are not bound to suppose it to be his will; and consequently both may and ought to pray against it; it being noways inconsistent for the same heart to have a spirit of supplication to pray against an affliction before it comes, and yet a spirit of submission to endure it when it does come.

Thirdly and lastly: To advance yet higher, this submission is not such a thing as excludes all endeavour to prevent or remove an affliction. That we may lawfully pray against it has been already proved; and it is certain that we may, within our compass, lawfully engage our endeavours against whatsoever we may engage our prayers: prayer being a duty of that nature, that neither in the accounts of God or man will it pass for serious, but as it is seconded with proportionable action. He who is visited with sickness may solicitously use all direct means for his recovery; and he who has lost his estate may vigorously endeavour to regain it from the spoiler's hand; and he who has been defamed may use all imaginable industry to clear his reputation; and yet, for all this, never in the least transgress the bounds of submission prescribed him by God, in any of these visitations. For God seldom delivers men but by the mediation of their own endeavours, where these endeavours may be used. But patience has its sufficient scope and proper sphere of showing itself, even where the powers of action cease. And that man who does the utmost to rid himself, from any pressure, which the laws of God and nature allow him to do, and when he finds the evil too big for him to master, humbly and quietly sits down under it, has fulfilled all the measures of a pious submission. For God casts no man under such circumstances as shall make idleness and pusillanimity his duty; but bids every man, upon the arrest of any sad calamity, "up and be doing," for the removal of it; though perhaps after he has done all, his lot may be to lie down and suffer under it.

And thus I have done with the negative part ; and shown what the submission spoken of in the text, is not ; as namely, that it is not any such thing as ought to restrain us, either from entertaining a tender sense of, or from using our prayers, and, what is more, our endeavours against any disaster or calamity inflicted by the hand of Providence upon us.

2. Come we now, in the next place, to show positively what this submission is, and wherein it does consist.

And in order to this, we are to observe, first in general, that it is a quiet composure of the whole man under any cross or mischievous accident befalling him, either in his person, interest, or any of his concerns whatsoever. And since every man is a compound of several parts and faculties, both of body and soul, which are all respectively to bear their share in this present affair, we will therefore trace the nature of this submission severally and distinctly through them all. And,

(1.) For the understanding ; there is required a submission of that to God, by a perfect approbation of the justice and equality of all his proceedings with us. And as the understanding is the governing and first moving principle of a man's whole behaviour ; so is it a matter both of the greatest difficulty, and importance too, rightly to state and settle the apprehensions and resentments of it : it being to the other faculties of the soul, like the foreman of a jury to his fellows, all are apt to follow its verdict.

And therefore our submission must begin here ; it must move upon this great wheel ; for in vain do we expect that the other parts of the soul should keep the peace, while the understanding mutinies and rebels. To prevent which, we must endeavour by all means to possess it with a full persuasion of the infinite reasonableness of all God's transactings with his creature, though the particular reason of them does not always appear. It being but suitable to the majesty of heaven to exact our submission without assigning any other reason for it but his own will : for *sic volo, sic jubeo*, howsoever harsh and tyrannical it may sound from a sinful man, like ourselves, though never so great ; yet from God, who is as essentially good as he is great, it is the highest reason and the most rational divinity : upon which account, let every man silence the disputes of his froward reason, not only with an *ipse dixit*, as the very disciples of Pythagoras could do, but also with an *ipse voluit* : an answer and a solution becoming the most improved and eminent proficients in the school of Christianity.

For what was it that raised Job to such a degree of insolence and indiscretion, as to venture to hold an argument with his Maker, and to dispute the case with the Almighty, but the sturdiness of his blind and saucy reason, falsely so called, that could not subscribe to the equity of those severe usages which he smarted under ? He could not comprehend how the divine

justice could degrade so much uprightness and integrity to a dunghill; and to all the miseries that a diseased body, and a distressed mind, and a desperate fortune could reduce him to: no, he thought he had holiness enough to have prescribed gentler methods to Providence. But at length, when religion had cooled the boilings of his passion and discontent, and taught his reason more sober discourses, then he sinks many notes lower, and utters himself in a quite differing strain; in Job xl. 4, 5, "Behold," says he, "I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer." And thus, what conviction and satisfaction he could not gain by disputing, he arrived to by obeying: submission was his casuist, and patience the best resolver of his doubts. And indeed, what can we account disputation in such a case, but the hostility of the mind, and a kind of rebellion of the soul against God; opposing reason and argument, or rather argument without reason, to Providence? So that a man can never be said truly to submit till he lays down these arms, and acknowledges a sufficient reason of any dispensation in the sole good pleasure of the dispenser; and, in the midst of all his misery, can confess that things ought to be so, because actually they are so. And thus much for the submission of the understanding.

(2.) This submission requires in the will also a perfect acquiescence and resignation of itself to God's will. For the will being properly the seat both of sovereignty and activity, the resistance which this makes must needs be the greatest and most considerable. The reluctancy of the understanding in opposing God, and complying with sinful objects, is like Adam's seeing the forbidden fruit and liking it: but the will's embracing them is like Adam's putting forth his hand and taking it. So that by our submission of the former to God, in any of the perplexing passages of our lives, the soul may be said as it were to keep silence; but by this latter, it also gives consent. By that it confesses the reasonableness, by this also the suitableness of the dispensation. By the former it could say, It is just: by this latter it can say also with David, "It is good that I have been afflicted."

And how necessary an ingredient of our submission this is, will appear to any one who shall consider the absoluteness and autocracy of this faculty: whereby the will is free either to follow or not to follow the advice of the understanding: so that when that has done its utmost in the way of counsel and instruction, the issue of the execution follows wholly the resolves of this. For it is this which commands and lords it in the soul; every thing that a man does or desires being entirely at its beck.

Upon which account it is, that the overpowering efficacy of the Spirit of God in the conversion of a sinner, appears in nothing so much, as that it conquers and subdues this free, self-

governing faculty, to a perfect compliance with all its motions; and that without the least entrenchment upon its freedom. For it makes us willing, and draws us in that manner, that we yet follow of our own accord. Now such a readiness is here required in the business of our submission: it must be perfectly free and voluntary; and that not only as to an exclusion of all force, but also of the servilities of fear and terror; which take off some of the perfection of our freedom, in respect of the motive or inducement to an action, though they cannot in respect of its productive principle. As when a man throws his rich wares into the sea, to prevent a wreck, and to save his life, he does indeed will what he does, but yet it is with an unwilling kind of willingness: for though the will absolutely commands the thing to be done, yet still the motive of doing it is full sore against its inclination.

But such a submission to the hand of God will not suffice us here, nor turn to any account in the reckonings of heaven: where every performance is rated chiefly by the manner of it; and the spring of principle as much considered as the object. God regards not that submission that is not out of love to him. And "perfect love," we know, "casts out fear;" that is, God will have us submit, not as slaves, but as sons: so as to kiss the rod that corrects us; and knowing from whom the blow comes, to receive it not only with quietness, but complacency. And thus to demean ourselves in our sufferings, is the very soul and spirit of a filial submission.

(3.) There is required also a submissive composure and serenity in our passions and affections. For naturally these are the most unruly and outrageous faculties of the soul; and such, indeed, as set the whole world in a combustion. For how insolent is pride, how intolerable is anger, and how noisome and imperious is lust! No confusion in human affairs ever falling out, but the cause of it always lies here; and still the commotion begins in the fury and violence of the affections, those great masters of misrule, which, like the waves of a troubled sea, swell and rage, and rise up against heaven, when any thing from thence blows rough and hard upon them. It is impossible that either a proud, a lustful, or an angry man, so continuing, should be patient; forasmuch as the same frame of spirit, which disposes him to one, directly indisposes him to the other. Patience is the effect and consequent of self-denial and mortification; and the passions and affections are the proper objects of that, they are the things that are to be denied and mortified; so that a man must have passed many stages in this excellent course, before he can arrive at the perfection of making the duty of submission his practice, and much less his pleasure. For how hard is it to maintain a smooth and equal temper in one's mind, when there is nothing but cross and rugged accidents in the whole affairs of a man's life! How

hard is it to see and feel great disturbances without, and yet to keep all quiet within! to behold the prosperity of the wicked, the false, and the treacherous, and not to say in our haste, that "we have cleansed our hands in vain," and retained our innocence to no purpose! It is infinitely difficult so to conquer and keep down the insurrections of a furious passion, as to command and hold it within compass, when it meets with fuel and provocation.

The faculties of the soul do much resemble the economy and constitution of a commonwealth, in which the passions are like the vulgar rout, or meaner sort of people, who are always the most impatiently sensible of any the least burden: and when the government imposes any thing upon them, are presently apt to tumultuate, to rise, and to rebel: so when the least chastisement from God pinches us, forthwith the unruly passions are apt to clamour, and cry out, grievance and oppression. But now God will have all these clamours hushed, all these resistances quelled, and an humble subjection paid to the most grating edicts of his will, proclaimed and made known to us by the events of his providence.

And indeed, thus to compose and master our rebellious passions is a duty that may commend itself to us, not only from the necessity of a strict command, but also from the excellency of the work itself. For it was this alone, which the greatest philosophers, and particularly the Stoics, placed their highest happiness and perfection in; namely, to regulate and subdue their passions to such a degree, as to bring themselves to a perfect apathy, to stand fixed and unmoved, when any thing thwarted either their interest or desires; which glorious (and perhaps more than human) frame of mind, though it was not their felicity to reach, yet it was their commendation to aim at. But surely Christians, who act by higher principles and greater helps, should think it but reasonable, with such advantages, to go a pitch beyond bare, unassisted nature; and, by their actions, to make good the heathens' pretences, and to count it a shame for themselves not to attain, in part at least, what the philosophers were so generous as to attempt.

(4.) There is required yet further to this submission, a suppressing of all hard and discontented speeches; and this is so absolutely necessary, that the whole work of submission is set forth and expressed to us by "silence," and "not opening our mouths," as here in the text, and elsewhere, by "putting our mouths in the dust;" that is, by shutting, and, as it were, even stopping them up, from letting fly at any of the cross, irksome, and severe passages of providence. "He that ruleth his tongue," says St. James, "is a perfect man;" forasmuch as by this he declares himself lord and master of his passions, which, when they domineer, chiefly make use of this member, as the prime instrument of their rage. In like manner, he who can submit without

noise and murmur, proves his submission perfect, as springing from a complete conquest of all unruly motions within. While Job let loose the reins to his impatience, he let the same loose also to his language; filling heaven and earth with querulous outcries, vehement imprecations upon himself, and expostulations with heaven: sometimes questioning the equity of the divine proceedings with him; sometimes cursing, and bitterly exclaiming against the day of his birth, and the unhappy hour of his conception. Thus, so long as his towering passion was upon the wing, it beat the air with loud and vain complaints: and, like a froward child, was always crying, and nothing could still his peevish and impertinent rage. But the same temper of mind which reduced him to submission, reduced him also to silence, and checked the sallings out of such wild, ungoverned expressions, as could tend to no other effect, but to increase the guilt of him that spoke, and the indignation of him that heard them. A lamb, we know, suffers with silence, and parts not only with its fleece, but even with its life also, without noise; but it is the unclean swine which roars and cries when any one lays hold of him, and we read of no such creature in the flocks of Christ; they are only the innocent, silent, suffering sheep, that have a title to his care and protection.

Any kind of impatience under God's hand does indeed offend him; but the impatience of the tongue has this peculiar malignity in it above all others, that it also dishonours him in the face of the world: for while our impatience bounds itself within the understanding, will, or affections, so long it lies retired from the observation and eye of men, which pierces not into the secrets of the heart; but when it once comes to proclaim itself in words and noise, the multitude round about is called in as witness of our insolent deportment towards God; the sin becomes loud and clamorous, public and provoking; and so puts God upon new severities to revenge upon us the affront openly passed upon his honour; a thing which he is too jealous of, to prostitute and expose it to the scorn and arrogance of every bold sinner.

Silence is a thing of great decorum in a suffering person, whose condition properly calls him to sorrow; the most natural and becoming dialect of which is, to say nothing. For even the common and received measures of human converse allow it only to the prosperous, the gay, and the rising persons of the world to talk high, and argue, and expostulate much to no purpose; but where affliction has brought a man so low, as to make it difficult for him to be heard, it has made it also fit for him not to speak.

Besides, no man ought to be endured to complain, who is not presumed to have right on his side. But can any man have a right against God? can he implead his Maker? or prefer a bill of grievances against his Preserver? I am sure, if his plea be traversed in the court of conscience, that must and will pro-



nounce on God's side, and vote the accuser the only criminal. "Why should a living man complain; a man for the punishment of his sins?" says the prophet Jeremy, in Lam. iii. 39. In which piece of scripture there are more arguments than words or syllables to demonstrate the unreasonableness of any man's complaining against God. For first, shall any one complain of his benefactor? and does not God abundantly prove himself so, even by this, that the person complaining is yet alive, and thereby able to complain? or shall a guilty person complain of his judge? and complain also while he is punished, which implies demerit? and, what is more, punished less than he deserves, which imports mercy? For every sin revenged upon the sinner, according to the full measure of its guilt, would quickly put him out of all possibility of complaining in this world, or bemoaning his case on this side hell; where, that he is not disposed of already, is enough to teach him, that it were much fitter for him to turn his complaints into gratulations; and, instead of crying out of the hardship of his condition, to magnify the divine goodness, that it is not remediless and intolerable. Let every afflicted person therefore "set a watch before the the door of his lips," and beware that the intemperance of his tongue robs him not of that crown, that is prepared only for such as suffer with silence and discretion.

(5.) And lastly, to complete our submission to God in a suffering estate, there is required also a restraint of all rage and revenge against such as are the instruments by which God is pleased to humble and afflict us. A perfect submission to the will of the first cause is naturally apt to reconcile us to the second; though not for his own sake, yet for his, at least, who was pleased to make use of it. For what is an enemy, when he acts the utmost of his fury and barbarity, but a scourge in the hand of the Almighty, either punishing a sinner, or chastising a son? And therefore we find David, when he was cursed and railed at by Shimei, in that villanous, lewd, insufferable manner, yet utterly refusing to revenge upon him that high indignity, though passed by a subject upon his prince, and his prince in distress; that is, against all laws, not only of loyalty, but of nature and common humanity. But now, what could it be that induced David to demean himself in such a manner to so bitter an enemy and so mean a wretch? Surely nothing either desirable or formidable in the person himself; no, nothing but this one consideration, that at that time Shimei came, as it were, upon an errand from heaven, and cursed David by commission from God himself. "God has bid Shimei curse," says David, 2 Sam. xvi. 10. Not that God did directly and indeed give him any such command; but that, by his providence, he had then cast David under such circumstances of misery and distress, as would infallibly provoke an adversary of a malicious and a base spirit to insult over him. Now this quiet and meek deportment of David

towards so vile and so provoking an object, was a direct act of piety and submission to God himself; who never accounts himself more honoured by us, than when our reverence to him can command us to compliances so much against the grain of our nature; and tie up our hands from those violences, which the fierce appetite of revenge would otherwise so passionately and easily, and many times so creditably, carry us out to.

If, upon any injury done us, we can but prevail with ourselves to see the hand of God principally acting in the whole affair, it will certainly much allay our spleen against the immediate workers of the mischief: and if we can but cease to be angry with the judge, and the condemning sentence itself, surely we shall not much concern ourselves to rage at the executioner; who is but a servant, and only ministers to the will and command of a superior.

But on the other side, all bitter and vindictive treating of an injurious person, is in its proportion a contest with Providence; even that Providence that not only overrules, but also employs the worst of events and the wickedest of persons. And he whose spirit frets, and boils, and raves against his enemy, because of the calamity that he feels himself brought under by his means, strikes as high and as far as he is able. The dog that bites the stone that is flung at him, would do as much to the hand that flung it, if he had it within his reach. But the temper of a Christian prompts him to quite other things, and teaches him to measure his behaviour, not by what his enemy has deserved, but by what the grand exemplar of patience has both commanded, and himself in the same case practised.

And yet I do not say, that it is any man's duty to account his enemy his friend; to court or embrace a tyrant; or to take him into his bosom, who would have taken the bread out of his mouth. Some indeed may think it a policy so to do; and perhaps, by so thinking, may prove just such politicians, as the man that took a frozen snake into his house, and cherished and warmed it, till at length it hissed, and bit, and stung him to death for his absurd compassion. But be it a policy, I am sure it is no duty for a man to caress, and hug, and be fond of his mortal adversary; nor to fawn and cringe, and lick the foot that basely and barbarously tramples upon him. No man is forbid by any law of God or man to look upon an enemy as an enemy, howsoever he may be bound to treat him. Forasmuch as no law, human or divine, can oblige a man to entertain a false judgment, either of things or persons. But he who supplants a man in his estate, or any of his lawful interests, is and ought to be looked upon by that man as a malicious underminer. And he who by unworthy calumnies blasts his neighbour's reputation and good name, may and ought to be accounted (as in truth he is) a black-mouthed, virulent backbiter: and the name of friend is by no

means to be fouled or abused by being applied to such a one. Yet still for all this, I own it to be every man's duty to leave such a person to the vengeance of heaven, and not to act himself as judge in his own cause, by carving out his own measure of revenge upon him. It is his duty to "stand still," as Moses bade the Israelites, "and to see the salvation of the Lord." All the pains that he is to take in this case, is to prevail with himself to do nothing, and to be only a spectator, not an actor in his enemy's confusion.

And indeed this is sometimes pains enough: and no small piece of self-denial and submission, thus to keep within the strict line of God's commands, when either passion or interest would tempt him to leap over it; as it will do very importunately, when a man finds himself grieved, and ill-used in his person, name, or estate; and disturbed in any of those interests, which God and nature have made it his birthright to enjoy. Yet since it often so falls out, that God is pleased to let loose the oppressor upon all these, he also calls upon us to behave ourselves as persons having no authority to right ourselves, but depending wholly upon the supreme justice of heaven both for deliverance and reparation.

And thus I have finished the first general head proposed for the handling of the words, which was to declare the nature of the submission spoken of in the text: and that both negatively, by showing what it is not; and also positively, by showing what it is. As namely, that it is a suppressing of the restiness and contradiction of our understandings, the rebellion of our wills, the tumult of our passions, the querulous outcries of our tongues, and lastly the vindictive fierceness of our actions or behaviours, under any calamity or distress, injury or provocation whatsoever.

Now by way of consequence and deductions from what has been delivered, we shall from the foregoing particulars naturally infer these three things:

1. The worth and excellency of such a submissive, composed frame of spirit.

2. The difficulty of attaining to it. And,

3. And lastly, the necessity of an early and long endeavour after it. And,

1. For the excellency of it. It is that which all the great and wise men in the world have both striven after in themselves, and admired in others: and it is as impossible for a man to be great, as to be good without it. It is the practice of the truest and the highest philosophy. And there is nothing that draws so much contempt upon a man, as the want of it. For how uncomely a sight is a man in a rage! a man fretting, and fuming, and suffering his passion to ride his reason; indeed so uncomely is it, that there is no man living who allows it in himself, but will

condemn and despise it in another. Nor is there any thing that so peculiarly unfits a man for business, and doing such things as may render him considerable. Business is to be carried on with counsel, and a calm, sedate conduct of things ; which can never take place, where passion hinders all foresight, and fury and fluster make thinking and contriving utterly impossible. It is not the storm, but the gentle wind that must carry the vessel to its designed haven. And to lead and govern an army, requires another kind of spirit from that which heats and acts a man in the battle.

On the other side, patience is, as it were, the girding up of the soul, which, like the girding up of the body, gives it both strength and decency too. In the judgment of all the intelligent part of the world, patience is conquest ; and in St. Paul's esteem, Rom. viii. 37, it is sometimes more ; it being hardly possible to conceive any condition that a man can fall into so miserable, nor any injury or contumely that can pass upon him so sharp and provoking, in which patience does not at length get the better. And he that quietly suffers the ill turn will in the end both shame and weary him that does it. For all violence is its own executioner : and indignation, not enlivened by resistance, like a flame not blown up, goes out of itself.

But the excellency of this great virtue appears yet further from this, that the greatest persons that ever lived, and whom Providence sent into the world upon the most important messages that ever were delivered to mankind, have been signal and remarkable for it. And those were Moses and our Saviour Christ himself ; both of them, in their several times, the meekest persons upon the earth : and such as (according to the true measures of greatness) were of too great and high a mind to do any violence, but not of too great to suffer it. Both of them show their magnanimity in this, that "being reviled," and that by persons extremely their inferiors, "they reviled not again." And for the latter of the two, did the royal diadem ever sit so gloriously upon the head of any earthly prince, as the crown of thorns did upon the head of our Saviour ? or could any thing so fully prove him more than a man, as to be buffeted, scourged, scoffed at, spit upon, and at length crucified, without so much as one impatient word ?

The achievements of passive valour [are upon many accounts more glorious than those of active : forasmuch as there is a great force and inclination in nature, pushing it on to exert itself in the way of action, but not at all to dispose it to suffer. This is a thing which mere nature flies from and abhors. And if we compare these two together, whether doing or suffering duly circumstantiated ought to have the preeminence, still let us remember this in behalf of the latter, that it was suffering which redeemed the world.

2. From the foregoing particulars we learn also the difficulty

of attaining to such a submissive frame of spirit. Which difficulty will appear from these two things: (1.) From that opposition which a man is to conquer, before he can attain to it. And, (2.) From that mean, though mistaken opinion, which the generality of men have of such a temper. And,

(1.) For the opposition that a man is to conquer, before he can arrive to it. He is to force and fight his way through all the resistance that the strongest powers of nature can make against him. For no man is born a patient man; whatsoever personal advantages and dispositions some particular constitutions may afford towards it, more than others. But every man comes into the world with something of pride and passion about him, which is to be subdued and mortified, before he can be fit to live in the world, and much more before he can be fit to leave it. But now, it is patience, which must take down these heights, and level these mountains into valleys. It is patience, which must smooth off the ruggedness of passion and the unruliness of appetite; and so make plain a way for reason and religion to run their course in. I showed before, that there was a natural stubbornness and averseness in every faculty of the soul, to a compliance with the divine will, especially in those severer instances of it, which call upon a man to take the yoke upon his neck, and the burden upon his shoulders, and to be quiet, humble and content in the most calamitous condition. It is a hard lesson to do God's will, but a much harder to suffer it. Nature has not only an insufficiency for, but also a contrariety to this. For reason will be disputing, the will disobeying, and the passions will murmur and rebel: and what is there in bare nature, that can overrule all these? and from such a posture of defiance, compose and quell them into the contrary posture of the meekest submission? This is that which both scripture and philosophy style a man's conquering of himself. A victory, in the judgment of all wise and sober men, more glorious and more difficult too, than any that crown the memory of Cæsar and Alexander. So much harder, and consequently so much greater a thing is it, for one to endure another man's rage, than to vent his own.

(2.) The other cause of the difficulty of attaining to such a patient, submissive frame of spirit, is from the contempt and disregard attending it, through the false estimate which the generality, or rather, vulgarity, of men have of it. For when patience must pass for pusillanimity, who would take pains to procure himself so disadvantageous a character? and endeavour to conquer his passions, if for the greatest conquest in the world he must be accounted a coward?

Desire of glory is generally the great principle that animates men to high and difficult attempts. But when huffing and hectoring must be looked upon as the only badges of gallantry and courage, what can recommend the exercise of patience against

the disgrace of it? or induce a man to put up an affront, when the result of virtue shall be reputed the want of spirit? This indeed is a discouraging consideration; but it is so only from a most unjust and false judgment of things. For patience is not the want of spirit, but the government of it. It is a virtue; and therefore the ingredients of it are choice in the agent, and difficulty in the object. And he only is or can be a patient man, who is first a man of courage; who has sense enough to resent a provocation, spirit enough to prompt, and opportunity to enable him to revenge it: and yet in the midst of all these tempting circumstances, chooses rather to offer up his passion a sacrifice to his virtue; and by a fixed, settled judgment of mind, thinks it as much nobler to pass by an injury, than to repay it, as it is to slight an unworthy person, than to strive to be like him. But still, I say, when the generality of men judge otherwise, though by error and mistake, yet the tyranny of a general mistake is so imperious and intolerable, that for the most part it is too hard for an ordinary virtue to contend with. And that which puts patience out of credit, will, with some, quickly put it out of countenance too; unless grace comes in as a second to nature, and the conscience of a practice overcomes the disrepute of it.

3. And lastly, we learn from what has been delivered, the necessity of an early and long endeavour after such an excellent frame of mind. The conquest which the patient man is to make is not by battle, but by siege; one is quickly over, but the other is often a long and a tedious task. The apostle calls upon us to "let patience have its perfect work: and few things, we know, arrive to perfection, but by degrees. It is a high and a glorious ascent, and there is no getting up to it but by steps. It must make its entrance into the soul by a total extirpation of the contrary habits; and no habit can be presently rooted up, where nature is the soil in which it grows. For do we think it possible for a proud man to grow humble in a day? or for a passionate man to get the absolute command of his passions in a few weeks? It is, I confess, possible with God, and omnipotence can effect it; but what God can do is not the measure of what he will. According to the stated method of the divine acting upon the soul of man, the Spirit of God proceeds gradually, and grace imitates even where it exceeds the course of nature. So that where it rids the soul of any vicious habit, it destroys it insensibly and by degrees; and where it infuses good habits, it instils them into the soul by small proportions, they are an oil that is dropped, not poured into it. And it is the judgment of all divines, that infused habits come into the soul after the same manner with those that are acquired. Grace acts like nature, even where the effect is above it.

He therefore who would co-operate with the grace of God, for the working of so noble a change upon himself, as to keep his

passions calm and regular, in spite of all provocations that would inflame them; he who, in all the cross accidents of life, would have his own will be done, were, wrapped up in the divine will, and be able to say, as his great master and example, Christ himself, "Not my will but thine be done:" he, I say, who would arrive to such a height of Christianity, let him begin early; let him consider with himself the length, the difficulty, and the fatigue of "the race that is before him," and set out betimes. Let him inure himself in his minority to lesser self-denials and mortifications; let him learn to put up and pass by a slighting, undervaluing word, and in time he shall find himself strong enough to conquer and digest an injurious action. Let him learn to overlook his neighbour's incivility, and in time he shall be able with patience and firmness of mind to endure his insolence and his cruelty, and that without being discomposed by any instigations to revenge: and let him accustom himself to do this often, and at length he shall be able to do it always.

But if a man suffers his impatience to grow up with him, and gives it its free, outrageous, unbounded scope to the greatest part of his age, he must not hope to master and dispossess such a giant of his strong hold by a few assaults; he must not think wholly to alter and transform himself, and pick up such a virtue as patience on a sudden. He who has allowed his passion to live, and rage, and domineer to the age of forty or fifty, must not expect, without a very extraordinary grace indeed to be patient at threescore. So infinitely sottish and ignorant of human nature are those men, who think it in their own power to change and reform their manners when they please. No; it is a long and a severe discipline; and the wisest and best of men have found it task enough for their whole lives. And therefore certainly none deceive themselves so foolishly, and so fatally too, as those who design to learn, just as they are leaving off to live. The times of youth and prosperity are the proper times to strengthen and to ballast the mind with pious principles and wise customs, against the trying, searching times of age and adversity. For if these seasons do not find a man patient, they seldom make him so. They are the seasons to spend upon a stock, and not to gather one; to crop the fruits of a virtuous habit, and not to plant it. For surely no man goes about to careen and fit up his ship in the midst of a storm, nor to buckle on his armour in the heat and fury of the battle. No; this is a work that should have been done before. It is a work of preparation; and it can be no time for a man to prepare a thing, when he is just about to use it.

This is certain, that afflictions will come, trials and perplexing providences will some time or other overtake us, and God knows how suddenly and how severely. And then happy; and only happy, is that man, who by a long and daily exercise of this great

virtue, has forearmed and fortified himself against the fierce and critical day of trial; who to temperance has added patience," that is, to the proper virtue for prosperity, has joined the proper one for adversity. I say, "blessed is that faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so prepared." Verily, as patience has made him ruler over himself; so according to our Saviour's own expression, "his Lord shall make him ruler over all his goods."

To which our great Lord and Saviour, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be rendered and ascribed, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.



# SERMON XVI.

## PART II.

### THE DUTY OF RESIGNATION.

#### PSALM XXXIX.

*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth ; because thou didst it.*

I FORMERLY made an entrance into these words, and observed in them these two parts.

First, David's submissive deportment under a sharp affliction : " I was dumb, I opened not my mouth."

Secondly, The ground and reason of such his deportment, which was the procedure of that affliction from God ; " I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it."

And so I showed the words were a full lecture of patience, recommending to us a great virtue by a great example, and consequently designed to argue us into an absolute, entire submission to the divine will, in our most pressing and severe distress. The prosecution of them I cast under these two general heads :

I. To give some account of the nature and measures of this submission.

II. To show the reasons and arguments for it, as the suffering person stands related to God.

The first of these I have already despatched, and proceed now to

II. The second, which is to show *what reasons and arguments may be produced for the submission here spoken of, as the suffering person stands related to God.* And for this, I think, we may lead our way with this general assertion : that there is no thought, which a man can possibly conceive either of God or of himself aright, but will afford a strong argument to enforce this submission upon us. He that duly considers both what God is, and what he himself is, can need no other demonstration of the infinite folly and absurdity of opposing or contending with him. But yet to give light and life to this general proposition by particular instances, there are six things in God that offer themselves to our consideration ; which are so many invincible arguments to quiet and compose all those unruly motions, that are apt to disturb the spirit of a man, when God by any severe passage of his

providence calls him to a state of suffering: and this is certain, that every call from God to suffer, is a command also to submit.

1. The first is God's irresistible power. And there are some who place God's very right of sovereignty in the boundlessness of his power; affirming that the great reason why God may do any thing is, because he can do any thing. But far be it from any sober person to discourse of the divine nature and actings upon the stock of such a principle. But yet to illustrate and make out the absurdity of any thing that looks like a non-submission or repugnancy to the afflicting hand of God, were it possible for us to imagine or suppose that God had no right to treat his creature in so severe a manner, yet the surpassing greatness of his power has rendered it impossible for the creature to receive any benefit by demurring to his right. Such a plea being like a poor conquered captive's impleading a victorious sword, absolutely senseless and ridiculous; it being certainly absurd to resist, where it is impossible to conquer or escape. A good cause itself, against an overpowering force, is an impotent, insignificant thing; impotent as to self-support, insignificant as to success. For power is the great disposer of the issues and events of things: and where-soever there is any effect, it is certain that some power or other is the cause. And therefore all acts of hostility or opposition upon a mischief done or offered, suppose in the person who makes the opposition, an opinion at least of power in himself able to repel or revenge that mischief; and all complaint supposes a likelihood of engaging the strength and power of such as hear it, in the help and vindication of him who makes it; and is indeed used only as a means or instrument to supply the defect of a man's own personal power by the conjunction of other men's. But now, where neither of these considerations can take place, both resistance and complaint are utterly irrational: as in the case of the divine power's dealing with man, it must needs be. For what is all the world to him that made the world? 1 Cor. x. 22, "Do we provoke God to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" All the nations, all the armies of the whole earth are to him but as "the drop of the bucket," or "the small dust of the balance:" and can we possibly think or speak of things under a greater disparity? And if so, will reason allow that there should be any contention where there can be no proportion? "He has done whatsoever pleased him both in heaven and earth," Psalm cxxxv. 6. As soon as his will gives the word, his power executes. "No god can deliver as he can," says Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iii. 29; nor can any one destroy as he can, says our Saviour, Matt. x. 28. He gives away kingdoms and empires, disposes of crowns and sceptres, with the breath of his mouth. And after all this, can a pitiful piece of animated dirt be fit to quarrel and expostulate with a power infinitely greater than his very thoughts, and therefore certainly in no degree to be matched by his strengths?

But to what purpose is it thus to argue or dispute the matter? to light a candle to the sun? or with much ado to prove a finite no-ways equal to an infinite? For that in effect is the thing now before us, while we are disputing, whether a man may contest with, or ought to submit to his Maker; and whether he should be permitted to talk high and loud, who can do nothing; and to be still upon the offending part, who is wholly unable to defend himself. A man so behaving himself is nothing else but weakness and nakedness setting itself in battle-array against omnipotence; a handful of dust and ashes sending a challenge to all the host of heaven. For what else are words and talk against thunder-bolts? and the weak, empty noise of a querulous rage against him who can speak worlds, who could word heaven and earth out of nothing, and can when he pleases word them into nothing again.

What can we utter or express greater of the vast distance between God and man, than by a kind of tautology to say, that God is God, and man is man? For it is certain that the first can have no predicate but himself; since he that is pure act, and perfect simplicity, can be said to be nothing, but by an identical repetition; in which both predicate and subject are no more than one and the same thing set forth in two several words: an evident demonstration, that words cannot keep pace with things, when we discourse of God. In short, since matters stand thus between God and us, let us consider what hands we are in, and what an irresistible gripe has hold of us; and let that teach us, even for our sakes to be quiet under it. There is indeed one, and but one way of encountering an infinite power; and that is, by an extraordinary, and (if it were possible) an infinite patience.

2. The next thing to be considered in God, as another argument for our submission to him, is his absolute, unquestionable dominion and sovereignty over all things. And this, according to the true and exact notion of things, differs formally from his power, though sometimes they are unskilfully confounded. For the difference between them is as great as between *δύναμις* and *ἐξουσία*, between *strength* and *authority*; between a bare ability to act and a right to act; which may be often one without the other; for there may be force and power without authority, and a rightful authority without any force or power; both of which we have known by woful experience.

But to the subject before us. This dominion of God is founded upon the best, the greatest, and most undeniable title; which is that of creation and providence. It being infinitely reasonable, that the first cause should upon that account be the supreme governor; and that whatsoever has been made and preserved by God, should be also commanded by him.

And besides, as God is the first cause, so he is also the last end

of all things; they terminate in him, as well as they issued from him; they were produced by his power, and designed for his pleasure: Rev. iv. 11, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." God might have chosen whether he would have made the world or no; for he had no need of it, to complete or add to his happiness, which was infinitely perfect within the compass of his own glorious being. Yet he was pleased, by a most free and unconstrained motion of his own will, to communicate and diffuse some little shadows of those perfections upon the creatures, and more especially upon those nearer resemblances of himself, men and angels.

Upon which account it is certain, that God has the entire disposal both of our persons and concerns; which, giving him a full propriety in all that we are or have, it is also as certain that he can do us no wrong. God's pleasure is his sufficient warrant, and therefore ought to be our undoubted law: for being vouched by the supremacy of heaven, there can be no appeal from it, no address to any higher tribunal; for as it is in Job ix. 12, "Who may say unto God, What doest thou?" It is not for the clay to expostulate with the potter, though instead of making it a vessel of honour, he treads it under foot, from whence he took it.

Men indeed may contest their rights one against another; even an inferior against his superior; because there is none so absolutely superior to, or lord over another, but holds that superiority or preeminence by a limited right, and by concession from him who is equally a lord and master to them both; and consequently will treat them as fellow-creatures and fellow-servants, and with an impartial hand exact an account of the behaviour of him who rules as well as of him who obeys. But it is not so with God, who being absolutely first and supreme, must needs upon the same score also be absolutely unaccountable: for none can stand obliged to render an account of his actions to his inferiors; such as we are all to God, and that by vast and unmeasurable proportions.

3. Together with God's irresistible power, and his absolute dominion, let the afflicted person consider also his infinite and unfailing wisdom: that wisdom by which he first made the world, and by which he does and always will govern it: that wisdom by which all the strange events and odd contingencies which sometimes occur, are cast into a regular method and an exact order; though the short reach of sense and natural reason is not always able to fathom the contrivance, or to discern the rare and curious disposal of them.

But how much soever we are in the dark as to this, still we are sure, that a being essentially wise cannot do any thing but wisely. Our ignorance of the particular reason of God's actings cannot infer or make them in the least unreasonable. It

is not accounted discretion to quarrel or find fault with the actions of a wise man; and much less can it be so to question the proceedings of an infinitely wise God; who is wise without any mixture of folly or imperfection, a privilege granted to no created nature: for he has "charged his very angels with folly," Job iv. 18. And be they ever so wise, it is certain that they are not wisdom itself.

It is arrogance in us to pretend so much as to understand the counsel of God, in his managing the great affairs of the world, and much more to blame or carp at them. Providence is more honoured by our admiration, than our inquiries: for these latter are for the most part the effects of pride, but always of curiosity; whereas the former always produces, or at least accompanies humility. We cannot pierce into the designs which God may have in every passage, every accident, that befalls us; we cannot look through the long and intricate train of causes and effects, and see by what strange, mysterious ways the smallest things are oftentimes directed by a sure hand to an accomplishment of the greatest ends. Providence is nothing else but infinite power managed by infinite wisdom, and the divine knowledge displaying itself in practice.

The consideration of which alone, one would think, should be abundantly enough to compose all our murmurings and repinings under any calamity that can possibly happen to us; and to reduce us to an acquiescence in our present condition, be it what it will. For while we fret and repine at God's will, do we not say in effect, that it is better for us to have our own? that is, in other words, that we are wiser than God, and could contrive and project things much more to our own advantage, if we had the disposal of them? Do we not as good as complain, that we are not taken in as sharers with God in the government of the world? that our advice is not taken, and our consent had in all the great changes which he is pleased to bring over us? These indeed are things that no man utters in words; but whosoever refuses to submit himself to the hand of God, speaks them aloud by his behaviour; which by all the intelligent part of the world is looked upon as a surer indication of man's mind, than any verbal declaration of it whatsoever. God perhaps is pleased to visit us with some heavy affliction, and shall we now, out of a due reverence of his all-governing wisdom, patiently endure it, or out of a blind presumption of our own, endeavour by some sinister way or other to rid ourselves from it? Passengers in a ship always submit to their pilot's discretion, but especially in a storm; and shall we, whose passage lies through a greater and more dangerous deep, pay a less deference to that great pilot, who not only understands, but also commands the seas?

It is sometimes so far from being a privilege for a man to be governed by his own will without the conduct of a wiser, that it

is indeed his misery, and his great unhappiness, and a direct throwing himself into the very mouth of danger: forasmuch as no human wit or wisdom can always distinguish between what will help and what will hurt us. If children might have their own wills, and be their own choosers, they would certainly choose poison before a cordial, if that were but sweet, and this bitter. And so it is with men themselves in reference to the dealings of God's providence; every dispensation of it may prove our physic or our bane, according as it is ordered and applied. God can make our most pleasing and promising enjoyments become a plague and a destruction to us, and "turn our very table into a snare:" and on the other hand, he can make us "gather grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles," and reap comfort from the sharpest affliction. God's wisdom still warrants all his actions to be for the best.

And as his glory is the grand end of all that he does, and consequently ought to be so likewise of all that we either do or suffer; so this is most worthy our observation: that whatsoever befalls any man, that makes most for God's glory in respect of that man; and if he be a child of God, most for his own good too. For in this case, things must not be estimated according to their bare natures, but according to their use and tendency; and as they lie under the direction of that Providence which guides things to effects much beside and beyond what their mere nature, left to its own course of acting, would carry them out to. Poison itself, by art, may be made an ingredient in the composition of an antidote; and things in themselves really good, yet, by ill circumstances and misapplication, may become hurtful and pernicious. Prosperity, considered absolutely and irrespectively, is better and more desirable than adversity; and yet, perhaps, as our spiritual estate and condition stands, adversity may be better for us; for that may harden, and this may humble us; that may prepare us for judgment, this for mercy. As the having blood in our veins is in itself naturally better than losing it, and yet in some cases, and under some distempers, the very principle of life becomes the occasion of death; and that blood kept in destroys, which being let out would recover and preserve us. Now the divine wisdom best knows all the maladies, all the weaknesses and distempers of our souls, and consequently ought to claim and challenge our sole and absolute dependence upon it, even in its harshest and most amazing prescriptions.

4. Let the afflicted person consider the great goodness, the benignity and mercy of God to all his creatures; which is so great, that the psalmist tells us, in Psalm cxlv. 9, it spreads itself with a universal extent "over all his works;" but especially the noblest and most beloved piece of his workmanship, mankind; which seems to have been created by God purposely to show how much he delighted in mercy. God is the greatest of kings and

potentates, but yet has nothing of a tyrant in his nature, how ill and tragically soever some may represent him: he takes no delight in our groans, no pleasure in our tears, but those that are penitential. It is no pastime to him to view the miseries of the distressed, to hear the cries of the orphan or the sighs of the widow. The prophet tells us, in Lam. iii. 33, that "God does not willingly afflict the children of men;" he seems to share in the suffering, while he inflicts it; and to feel the very pain of his own blows, while they fall heavy upon the poor sinner. And again, in Isaiah xxviii. 21, judgment is called God's "strange work;" a work that he has no proneness to, nor finds any complacency in: and therefore, whensoever he betakes himself to it, we may be confident that it is not for the sake of the work itself, but that he has some secret, overruling design of love, which he is to compass after an unusual, extraordinary way. He never lops and prunes us with his judgments, because he delights to see us bare, and poor, and naked, but because he would make us fruitful; nor would he cause us to pass through the fiery furnace, but to purge and to refine us. For can it be any pleasure to the physician to administer loathsome potions or bitter pills? or can it be any satisfaction to a father, to employ a chirurgeon to cut off his child's arm, were not the taking away a part found necessary to secure the whole? Common humanity never uses the lance to pain and torture, but to restore the patient. But now the care and tenderness of an earthly parent or physician is but a faint shadow and resemblance of that infinite compassion and affection which God bears to his children, even in the midst of his severest usage of them. For what is or can be that affliction, through which God's love does not shine and show itself to an eye spiritual enough to discern it? God sometimes dashes a man's beloved reputation, and exposes him to the scorn of those who are a juster object of scorn themselves. Sometimes he lessens a man's estate, and, after he has grown old in wealth and plenty, brings him, at length, in his declining years, to the irksome change of a poor, low, necessitous condition; and sometimes again, God breaks in upon a man's family, his dearest friends and relations, and so bereaves him of a right hand, or a second self. But still, as grievous as all these things may seem at first view, may not yet the traces and footsteps of divine love be discernible in all these strokes? For some perhaps may value more the esteem of men than that of God; and then is it not better for such a one to have his name blasted amongst men, than blotted out of the book of life? Another may idolize his money, and make his gold his god; and in such a case, is it not really more profitable for him to lose an earthly estate, than to have no treasure in heaven? And a third may dote upon friends, and place his whole heart and confidence in his relations; and if so, is it not indeed his advantage to be stripped of a perishing, mortal

friend, and taken into the bosom of an everlasting father? Certainly every such person may write upon all his losses, *Periissem nisi periissem*. For be it reputation, estate, friends, or whatsoever else is or can be desirable to a man, that he has lost; yet, if by all this God has given laws to his outrageous appetites, and bounds to his ambitious designs; if by this he has extinguished in him the spirit of pride, and stirred up in him the spirit of prayer; and lastly, if by this he has mortified his worldliness and sensuality, and convinced him of the infinite vanity, the emptiness, and dissatisfaction that is in all created enjoyments; how much soever such a man has been a sufferer, it is certain that he has been no loser. He has indeed been upon a great traffic, he has driven the gainfullest bargain in the world, having exchanged his pence for pounds, things carnal for things spiritual; things which perish in their very use, for things that never fade.

5. Let the afflicted person consider God's exact and inviolable justice; so that, if he had no kindness for us to do us any good, it is certain that this alone would keep him from doing us any wrong; for this is the thing which omnipotence itself cannot do.

God never strikes without a cause, nor wounds us till our own sins draw the sword. All punishment essentially supposes and implies, one way or other, a guilt in the party punished; and every man's sufferings are a true comment upon his deserts. God punishes no man beyond the rate and proportion of his own demerit, though short of it he does very often; accepting small payments for great debts, and setting down fifty in the punishment, where sin has run us in arrears to him many thousands in the guilt. And can we then think it reasonable to maunder and repine at him, who treats us with such abatements? chastising us with whips, when he might lash us with scorpions; and only correcting, when he might with full warrant from his justice, confound us? The divine justice never acts up to its highest pitch, in its dealing with sinners in this world; but still proceeds with some temper and allay of mercy, which makes it quite another thing from what it would be, if it should flame out in its own native, proper, unrelenting severities. And sinners who taste of it, both in this world and the other too, find the vast difference of it here and there, by woful experience; for here it smites us only with the rod of admonition, and puts just so much sharpness into the blow, as may embitter sin to us, not thoroughly revenge it upon us. And therefore, in scripture dialect, God's righteousness is oftentimes but another word for his mercy; mercy being still predominant in the exercise and manifestation of it. So that at the same time God punishes men both for, and yet beneath their sins; and with great lenity still proportions his judgments rather to the measure of their strengths, than to that of their deserts.

6. And lastly, let the afflicted person consider the method of



Providence, in its dealing with such as have been eminent for their submissive deportment under God's afflicting hand, and he shall see how mightily God has turned all to their advantage at last; and that not only in the next life, but oftentimes very signally even in this too. The consideration of which alone may and ought to administer no small support to any one, who has understanding enough to compare past events with present, and so to read his own case in other men's. For in things of this nature, examples are the best arguments, and precedents the strongest persuasives: and therefore St. James, in his last chapter, having several times pressed this grand duty of patience, seals his exhortation with this argument, in verse 11, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord." And such an end and issue did God put to Job's calamity, that we find his prosperity returning, or rather with a full tide flowing in upon him in a more than treble increase: nay, and we read of his losses made up to him even in kind; besides the peculiar advantage accruing to his condition from the circumstance of his restitution, that by thus immediately passing from one extreme to another, the very neighbourhood of his sufferings gave him so much a quicker and livelier taste of his returning felicity. And then for David, who so quietly endured the rage and contumelies of Shimei, did he not presently see a merciful turn of providence restoring him to a more established royalty than ever he was master of before; and bringing that base tongue to lick the dust under his feet, that a few days before had so foully thrown dirt in his face?

Could we but trust God to do our business for us, to assert our cause, and to vindicate our innocence, we should find that he would not only answer, but also outdo our hopes; we should find that our sorrows would prove our harvest, and our sowing in tears make us reap sevenfold in joy.

Men are apt to think both themselves and others miserable, because they pronounce and pass judgment hastily, from the present sense of a grievance, without expecting its issue; which usually converts the sighs and lamentations of a pious mourner, into the triumphal songs of a joyful conqueror; and having led God's chosen ones through a Red sea and a "howling wilderness," plants them at length safe and free, in all the wealth and affluence of a promised Canaan. No person that ever heartily submitted to the rough dealings of Providence, could upbraid it with unkindness at the last; but has still found the same hands more bountiful in rewarding, than ever they had been severe in striking.

The ways of patience may at first indeed appear rugged and frightful, full of terror and discouragement; but it is the end, we know, that still crowns the work, and the issue and conclusion, from whence all things take their estimate. A welcome reception at our journey's end is a sufficient recompence for all the

fatigue and tediousness of the way ; and the scripture tells us, that as soon as a woman in child-bed is delivered, all the pangs and travails of her labour presently vanish, and are swallowed up in "the joy that a man is born into the world." True wisdom in taking the worth and value of things, never terminates in the present state of them, but casts its eye chiefly upon the future. And therefore, as no man can be accounted truly happy, even as to the things of this world, till his death ; so neither can any one pass for truly miserable (and that even upon a temporal account) till he has finished his course here ; for every thing is well or ill, as it ends : and this let every afflicted person cause his meditations chiefly to dwell upon, still directing his observations to the final issue of God's dealing with such as have signalized their patience, by suffering his sharpest rebukes with all the stillness and composure, constancy and firmness of a pious, humble, and well-resolved submission.

Now these six things in God being seriously thought upon ; namely, his irresistible power ; his absolute, unaccountable sovereignty ; his infinite, unerring wisdom ; his boundless goodness and benignity ; his exact and inviolable justice ; and lastly, his gracious way of treating all patient and humble sufferers, are so many mighty and irrefragable arguments to enforce this great duty of submission upon us, as the most rational thing imaginable : and that upon the account of three great and noble qualities constantly attending on, and naturally resulting from it, as it stands related to, and grounded upon those six foregoing considerations. And these are, 1. The necessity ; 2. The prudence ; and 3. The decency of such a submission ; all which jointly and severally prove and demonstrate the high and transcendent reasonableness of it. I shall speak something of each of them, and so close up all. And,

1. For its necessity. It is most certain, from what has been discoursed, that in this, as in all other cases, God will have his will ; and how should it be otherwise, when nothing can withstand it ? Submit we must to the calamity inflicted on us, unless we could be too wise or too strong for him that inflicts it ; for other ways of escape there can be none, but either by wisdom to contrive, or by force to wrest ourselves out of God's hand : but he that does the former must outwit omniscience ; and he that does the latter must overpower omnipotence. But all such counsels are vain, and ridiculously impossible ; for there is no contending with heaven, no wrestling with God, but by prayer. We know what a weak, pitiful thing a subject is, if contending with his earthly prince ; but much more so, opposing himself to the almighty King of kings, before whom the powers of the whole earth are as nothing, and all the empires and kingdoms of the world but as so many bubbles before the fury of the wind. He who carries "his breath in his nostrils" surely should be

careful to carry a pious and a discreet tongue in his mouth. "Who," says the prophet Isaiah, speaking of the dreadful power of God, "would set briars and thorns against him in battle? he would go through them, he would burn them together," Isaiah xxvii. 4. Briars indeed may be sharp and troublesome, but not to the fire that feels them not, but in a moment devours and consumes them. In like manner men may snarl, and word it high against Providence; but we have already observed what silly, senseless things such verbal assaults are against the Creator and Governor of the universe, and to what little purpose we spend our breath against him who gave it, and can take it away when he pleases. Expostulations and invectives may perhaps affect and move a weak man like ourselves, but they are lost before they can get to heaven; they cannot reach, and much less pierce those glorious mansions. Words of rage and impatience can hurt none but him that speaks them, especially when they are shot at God: and therefore, as the same prophet says again, in ch. xlv. 9, "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth," and then possibly they may strike one another in pieces. But a potsherd is a very unfit thing to run against a brazen wall, or to dash itself upon the "rock of ages."

All affronts put upon God by such a refractory, contumelious behaviour as we have been speaking of, are to be reckoned amongst the absurdities, as well as the impieties of our actions; such as reason itself would decry, should religion be silent. Things so full of paradox and brutish irrationality, that could great sins be fit to be laughed at, they were fitter to be run down with scoff and sarcasm, than to be thought worthy of a serious confutation; but though it is not for us to laugh at them, we may be sure that God does.

In fine, this we may rest satisfied of, that whensoever God's hand is upon us, we must either yield a voluntary, or be forced to a violent submission. If our stubbornness is such, that we will not bend, it is certain that our weakness is also such, that we must needs break. If God's message will not win upon Pharaoh, his plagues shall compel him; and therefore, when he sent Moses to him, he put a rod into his hand, as well as a word into his mouth. When God fully purposes to afflict a man, he is like a bird in a net, the more he strives and flutters, the more he is entangled; for the Supreme Judge of all things is resolved to go through with his "great work of judgment," and to make all obstinate, sturdy sinners know, that he has power to constrain, where his goodness will not persuade.

2. The second qualification of the submission here spoken of, which also is a further argument to enforce it, is the great prudence, as well as the necessity of it. There are few things in the world so totally and entirely bad, but some advantage may

be made of them by a dexterous management; and it is certainly a man's wisdom to make the best of a bad condition: there being a certain kind of pious and prudential husbandry, by which a man may so improve a calamity, as to make the endurance of that the performance of a duty, and, by his behaviour under it, to procure a release from it. We should with Isaac take the wood upon our shoulders, though we ourselves are designed for the sacrifice; and who knows, but as in his case, so in ours also, a patient resignation of ourselves to the knife may be the sure and direct way to rescue us from it? For, according to the commerce that God has established between this and the other world, momentary sorrows are improvable into everlasting joys; and we may build as high as heaven, if we lay the foundation deep and low in patience and humility. In 2 Cor. iv. 17, "Our light affliction," says the apostle, "which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." In which words, it is worth our while to observe the peculiar force and emphasis of the comparison, and the vast difference of the things that the apostle here confronts one against another: it is a "light affliction," set against a "weight of glory;" "a light affliction for a moment," against "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory:" so that it is impossible to word things to a higher disproportion. And now, when the case stands thus, if a man would not endure so much as the smart of a cut finger to gain a crown; or, as I may so speak, would not lose a hair to save his head; should we not question his wisdom as much as his courage? and look upon him as one so far from living by faith, that he does not so much as live up to common sense? For as Naaman's servant said to him, when he refused in scorn to follow the prophet's advice, "Had the prophet bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" So, where heaven is the prize, who would not endure hell itself for a while, to obtain that at last? But upon how much easier terms are we treated by God, when he says only, Suffer a few inconsiderable grievances here patiently, and that for a very short time, and then be infinitely, unchangeably happy for ever? It is wisdom, wisdom upon the truest and strictest estimate of things, not only to endure, but even to choose a temporal evil, which leads to an eternal good.

But admit that such a submission to the hand of God should not rid us from the calamity he is pleased to bring upon us, yet this we may be sure of, that it will give us ease and relief under it; and if it takes off nothing of our load, yet it will certainly add to our strength. For it is really armour to the inner man, and (if you will admit the expression) it is a kind of breast-plate within us; it being the nature of patience to make heavy things seem light, and of impatience to make the lightest things become really heavy. It is this that renders every affliction, according to

the prophetic phrase, truly and properly "the burden of the Lord." And still, the more we strive to cast off God's yoke, the more it galls us. The sum of all is this, that since there is an inevitable necessity of our suffering, when God calls us to suffer, it must needs be the highest piece of Christian policy, by our submissive demeanour to make a virtue of necessity, to extract good out of evil, and to endure that with patience, which we cannot remedy by power.

3. And lastly, to the necessity and prudence of such a submissive deportment under the hand of God, let us add also the decency of it, as none of the least enforcing considerations to oblige us to it: for we may trust it to the decision of any ordinary, if unprejudiced reason, whether it can be comely for a sinful, obnoxious creature to contend with him in whose hand his very life and soul is, and "whose are all his ways," as Daniel expresses it to Belshazzar, Dan. v. 23; and whether it can be fit for a slave, a vassal, to quarrel and contest the will and pleasure of his absolute lord and sovereign.

Add to this the follies and absurdities of impatience, considered simply in itself, and abstracted from those aggravations that it receives from the peculiar quality and condition of some persons: for in the very nature of it, as such, it degrades a man, not only from the degree of a Christian, but also of a man, stripping him of his very understanding and consideration; and so turning not only religion, but also reason itself out of doors. "In patience possess ye your souls," says our Saviour, Luke xxi. 19. It is this that gives a man the possession of himself; for impatience does, as it were, thrust him out of the present possession of his senses: it invades the capitol, reason is enslaved, and passion domineers? During the furies of which, he ceases for that time to be rational, and passes into the rank and order of brutes, which are wholly governed by appetite, and the present impulse of sense, in opposition to the sober conduct of reason, discourse, and deliberation.

Impatience has always these two ill ingredients in the very constitution of it, pride and anger; and can any thing possibly be more indecent, more absurd, and more to be exploded, than a proud beggar, an aspiring lump of dirt? or can there be a greater paradox in manners, than at the same time to be saucy, and to depend; to be arrogant, and yet indigent? And then for anger, it is a monstrous, irregular, unbecoming passion, even when it shows itself against an equal, but how much more against a superior; and yet incredibly, unconceivably more, when it fumes and rages against the immense power and the unquestionable prerogative of the supreme Sovereign of all things, whom our anger cannot reach, but the least spark of whose anger can for ever consume us! What a discomposure does this ungoverned affection work in the whole intellectual

frame, turning the mind topsy-turvy, clouding its apprehensions, entangling its counsels, and confounding its reasonings, till it has turned that little light which is in it into darkness, and so quite blown out "the candle of the Lord." And can this be a disposition of mind becoming a rational nature? a nature that God has made but one pitch lower than that of the angels?

But so much the more intolerable is such a stubborn, unsubmitive frame of spirit in men; when the whole host of the creation besides, are with the highest readiness and alacrity continually intent upon the execution of their great master's commands. The whole 104th Psalm, that noble and sublime piece of sacred poetry, is a full description of, and a panegyric upon the creatures' readiness to serve their great Lord; in verses 6 and 7, "The waters," says the psalmist, "stood upon the mountains; but at thy rebuke they fled, and at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away." Nothing to be seen but absolute obedience, even in these inanimate creatures, which, it seems, can obey a command, though they cannot so much as hear it. And then for other creatures, endued with a bare principle of life and sense, they also act in a constant compliance with the divine will, and that sometimes against the most natural inclination of their own. What more ravenous than a hungry lion? and yet he shall restrain his furious appetite, when God commands him not to touch a Daniel? What more devouring than the ravens? and yet even they shall part with their own food to an Elijah, when God bids them purvey for a servant of his in distress. And shall men, after all this; man, that has been so signally obliged by heaven, above all the rest of the creation; shall he, I say, be the only thing that shall resist and oppose the proceedings of the Almighty, by fretting and striving against every passage of Providence that comes athwart either his desires or designs? If this be not the highest transgression of the rules of decency, then surely there is no such thing as decency or regularity, order or proportion, in the whole frame and economy of this visible world.

And thus having further enforced this grand duty of submission, upon these three several accounts; to wit, of its absolute necessity; its high prudence and policy; and lastly, its great decency: I suppose there can need no other arguments to bind it fast upon the consciences of those who, besides their indispensable duty to God, hold it their no small concernment to acquit themselves to the world also, in all these considerations.

In the mean time, the foregoing discourse may teach us an art that all the wisdom of the world cannot teach; which is, to know how to make ourselves happy in the most afflicted, abject, and forlorn condition of life: and that is, in short, to acquiesce cheerfully and entirely in the good pleasure of Almighty God, whatsoever our estate or condition in this world falls out to be: for, to put all into one word, could men be but willing to do

what God commands, and to suffer what God inflicts, there could be no more room for any such thing as discontent or misery, in the whole course of things here below. The killing force of the greatest and the fiercest judgments, is even broken by yieldance and submission ; for still it is opposition that strengthens a calamity. And when the creature will needs wage war with God, God acts with the greatest reason and equity that can be expected, even from men warring against men ; those that will fight it out, he kills ; and those that will yield, he spares.

The felicities and miseries of this world are dispensed by God variously, and the changes of our lives are, for the most part, much more numerous than the years of them : so that he who now flourishes with all the plenty and glory that Providence can heap upon him, may, in a short time, see himself stripped and disrobed of all ; and then the use, the worth, and value of a patient submissive spirit will come to be understood ; since, without it, it will be impossible so to behave ourselves under God's afflicting hand, as not to add provocation to provocation, or to fall under one calamity, without making it the occasion of another.

Which consideration surely should be sufficient to beget in us a readiness, not only to bear, but even to "take up our cross;" and to make every suffering free and voluntary, by a subsequent act of choice, "looking unto Jesus," our great pattern and example, who, in obedience to his Father's will, "endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God."

To which he, of his mercy, vouchsafe to bring us all ; to whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

## SERMON XVII.

## PART I.

## CHRISTIANS EXHORTED TO LIVE PEACEABLY.

## ROMANS XII. 18.

*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

CHRISTIANITY, if we well weigh and consider it, in the several parts and members of it, throughout the whole system, may be justly called the last and the most correct edition of the law of nature, there being nothing excellent amongst the heathens, as deducible from the external light of nature, but is adopted into the body of Christian precepts. Neither is there any precept in Christianity so severe and mortifying, and at the first face and appearance of things grating upon our natural conveniencies, but will be resolved into a natural reason; as advancing and improving nature in the higher degrees and grander concerns of it.

And of so universal a spread is the benign influence of this religion, that there is no capacity of man, but it takes care for; not only his religious, but his civil and political. It found the world under government, and has bound those bonds of government faster upon it, by new and superadded obligations. And by the best methods of preservation, it secures both the magistrate's prerogative and the subject's enjoyment, by the happy provisions of peace; the encomiums of which great blessing I shall not now pursue, nor forestal here what will more aptly be inserted hereafter.

The text, we see, is a vehement, concerning, passionate exhortation to this blessed duty, and great instrument of society, peace: "If it be possible, live peaceably." It is suspended upon the strictest conditions, stretching the compass of its necessity commensurate to the utmost latitude of possibility.

The words are easy, but their matter full; and so require a full and a large, that is, a suitable prosecution; which I shall endeavour to give them in the discussion of these four particulars.

I. The showing what is implied in the duty here enjoined.

II. What are the measures and proportions by which it is to be determined.

III. What are the means by which it is to be effected.

IV. What the motives by which it may be enforced.

I. And for the first of these, *the duty here enjoined* is, "Live



peaceably;" which expression is ambiguous, and admits of a double signification. 1. It may be taken for the actual enjoyment of peace with all men: in which sense he only lives peaceably, whom no man molests. 2. It may be taken for a peaceable behaviour towards all men: in which sense he *lives* peaceably, by whom no man is molested.

The first of these senses cannot be here intended by the apostle, and that for these two undeniable reasons.

(1.) Because so to live peaceably is impossible; and what cannot possibly be done, cannot reasonably be commanded. The impossibility of it appears upon these two accounts.

1st. The contentious, unreasonable humour of many men. Upon this score, David complains of his enemies, that "when he spoke of peace, they were for war." Many of the enmities of the world commence not upon the merit of the person that is hated, but upon the humour of him that hates; and some are enemies to a man for no other cause in the earth, but because they will be his enemies. The grounds of very great disgusts are not only causeless, but oftentimes very senseless. Some will be a man's enemies for his looks, his tone, his mien, and his gesture; and upon all occasions prosecute him heartily with much concernment and acrimony. And therefore that argument is insignificant, which I have often heard used by some men to others; who, when they complain of injurious dealings, think they have irrefragably answered them in this, Why should such a one be your enemy? what hurt have you done him? or what good can he do himself by injuriously treating of you? All which supposes that some reason may and must be given for that which, for the most part, is absolutely unreasonable. A little experience in the world would quickly and truly reply to these demands, that such or such a one is an enemy, not upon provocation, but that his genius and his way inclines him to insult and to be contentious. And nature is sometimes so favourable to the world, as to set its mark upon such a person, and to draw the lines of his ill disposition upon his face; in which only you are to look for the causes of his enmities, and not in the actions of him whom he prosecutes.

There are some persons, that, like so many salamanders, cannot live but in the fire, cannot enjoy themselves but in the heats and sharpness of contention: the very breath they draw does not so much enliven, as kindle and inflame them; they have so much bitterness in their nature, that they must be now and then discharging it upon somebody; they must have vent, and sometimes breathe themselves in an invective or a quarrel; or perhaps their health requires it: should they be quiet a week, they would need a purge and be forced to take physic.

And now, if any one should be molested and have his peace

disturbed by such a person, would he be solicitous to find out the cause, and satisfy himself about the reason of it? When you see a mad dog step aside out of his walk only to bite somebody, and then return to it again, you had best ask him the reason why he did so? **Why**, the reason is, that he is mad, and his worm will not let him be quiet, without doing mischief when he has opportunity.

Now such tempers there are in the world, and always were, and always will be; and so long as there be such, how can there be a constant, undisturbed quietness in societies? We may as well expect that nobody should die when the air is generally infected, or that poison should be still in the stomach, and yet work no effect upon the body. God must first weed the world of all contentious spirits and ill dispositions, before a universal peace can grow in it. And this may be one reason to prove that a "living peaceably with all men," as it signifies the actual enjoying of such a peace, is utterly impossible.

2dly. The second reason is from the contrary and inconsistent interests of many men. Most look upon it as their interest to be great, rich, and powerful; but it is impossible for all that desire it to be so; forasmuch as some's being so is the very cause that others cannot. As the rising up of one scale of the balance does of necessity both infer and effect the depression of the other.

This premised, we easily know further, that there is nothing which men prosecute with so much vigour, vehemence, and activity, as their interest, and the prosecution of contrary interests must needs be carried on by contrary ways and motions; which will be sure to thwart and interfere one with another: and this is the unavoidable cause of enmity and opposition between persons.

Sometimes we see two men pecking at one another very eagerly, with all the arts of undermining, supplanting, and ruining one another. What! is it because the one had done the other an injury? or because he is of a quarrelsome temper? Perhaps neither; but because he stands in his way; he cannot rise, but by his disgrace and downfall; he must be removed, or the other person's designs cannot go forward. Now as long as both these interests bear up together, and one has not totally run down and devoured the other, so long the persons will be engaged in a constant enmity and contest.

The ground that the poet assigned as one great cause of the civil wars between Cæsar and Pompey, *Multis utile bellum*, is that into which most men's particular quarrels and enmities are resolved. In peace every man enjoys his own; and therefore he that has nothing of his own will be ready enough to blow the trumpet for war, by which he may possibly gain an estate, being secure already that he can lose none.

What is the reason that it is observed in tradesmen and arti-

ficers, that they are always almost detracting from one another; but that it is the apparent interest of one, by begetting in men a vile esteem of the other, to divert his custom to himself, or at least to secure that in his own hands which he has already? If the other person is the only workman, why then he shall monopolize all the custom; if he be as good as this, then this shall have the less; and this is that which sets them upon perpetual bickerings and mutual vilifications.

The sum of all is, that most men's interests lie cross, their advantages clash, or at least are thought to do so: and contrary qualities will prey upon one another. Where men's interests fight, they themselves are not like to be long at peace. But now God, in his wise providence, is pleased to cast the affairs of mankind into such a posture, that there will be always such inequalities and contrarieties in the conditions and estates of men. And this is the other reason, why to enjoy peace with all men is impossible.

(2.) But in the next place, admitting that it were not impossible, yet thus to "live peaceably with all men" cannot be the sense of the apostle's exhortation, forasmuch as it can be no man's duty. That which is the matter of duty ought to be a thing not only possible in itself, but also in the power of him to whom it is enjoined. But it is not in my power to enjoy peace with all men, since this depends upon their behaviour towards me, and not immediately upon mine towards them. And therefore it can be no more my duty, than it is my duty that another man should not be a thief or a murderer. If he will be so, I cannot prevent him, he only is the master of his own will and actions: and where the power of acting is seated, there only lies the obligation of duty; otherwise, if I should be obliged to that which depends not at all upon my power, a man might as well tell me that I am obliged to see that it does not thunder, or that the Turk does not invade Germany. Wherefore it is clear that the words of the text are to be understood only in the second sense propounded; and that living peaceably imports no more than a peaceable behaviour towards all men: which being the duty here enjoined, we are to see what is included in it.

And for this it seems adequately to consist of these two things: 1. A forbearance of hostile actions. 2. A forbearance of injurious, provoking words.

This seems to take in the whole scope of it, as comprehending all that makes up the behaviour of one man towards another, which are his actions and his words; what he does and what he says. And if those unruly instruments of action, the tongue and the hands, be regulated and kept quiet, there must needs ensue an entire peace.

1. And first, the living peaceably implies a total forbearance of all hostile actions; and that in a double respect: (1.) In a way of prevention. (2.) In a way of retaliation.

(1.) For the first, I call that prevention, **when** a man unprovoked makes an injurious invasion upon the rights of another, whether as to his person or estate. God, for the preservation of society, has set a defence upon both these, and made propriety sacred, by the mounds and fortifications of a law. For what living were there, did not the divine authority secure a man both in his being, and in the means of his being; but should leave it free for the stronger to devour and crush the weaker, without being responsible to the almighty Governor of all things, for the injury done to his fellow-creature, and the contempt passed upon the divine law? And certainly one would think it not only a reasonable, but a very easy thing for a man wholly unprovoked to keep his hand from his brother's throat, to let him live and enjoy his limbs, and to have the benefits of nature, and the common rights of creation. It is a sad thing for a man not to be safe in his own house, but much more in his own body, the dearer earthly tabernacle of the two. How barbarous a thing is it to see a Romulus imbruing his hands in the blood of his brother! and he that kills his neighbour kills his brother, as to the common bonds and cognation of humanity. Now all murders, poisons, stabs, and unjust blows, fall under this violation of the peace in reference to men's persons; which God will avenge and vindicate, as being parts of his image: for there is none who requires to be honoured in himself, who will endure to be affronted so much as in his picture.

It is looked upon by some as a piece of gentility and height of spirit, to stab and wound, especially if they are assured that the injured person will not resist; and so secure them the reputation of generosity without the danger of betraying their cowardice.

The other instance of violence, is the forcible wringing from men the supports of life, their estates, their revenues, or whatsoever is reducible to this notion, as contributing either to their subsistence or convenience. And this is not to be understood barely of oppression managed by open and downright defiance; but by any other sinister way whatsoever, as the overbearing another's right by the interest and interposal of great persons, by vexatious suits and violence cloaked with the formalities of a court and the name of law. And whosoever interverts a profit belonging to another by any of these courses, is a thief and a robber; perhaps a more safe and creditable one indeed, but still a thief; and that as really as if he did it by plunder and sequestration; which is only a more odious name, but not a more unjust thing.

And he is no less a disturber of the peace, and a breaker of this law, who oppresses the widow, and grinds the face of the fatherless and the poor, than he who forages a country with an army. For that is only violence with a greater noise, and more solemnities of terror. But God, who weighs an evil action by the malignity of its principle and the unjustness of its design,

and not by those exterior circumstances which only clothe its appearance, but not at all constitute its nature, has as much vengeance in store for an oppressing justice (if that be not a contradiction in the terms) as he has for the pillaging soldier or the insolent decimator: it being as truly oppression in the accounts of heaven, when proclaimed by the groans and cries of the orphan, as when ushered in with the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war.

For wherein should consist the difference? Is it because one stands upon his ground and repels the invasion, and the other opens his bosom to the blow, and resigns himself to his oppressor with patience and silence? Is it peace, because the man is gagged and cannot, or overawed and dares not cry out of oppression? Or is he therefore not wronged, because his adversary, by his place or greatness, has set himself above the reach of justice, and is grown too big for the law? It was an acute and a proper saying of one concerning a prevailing faction of men, *Solitudinem cum fecerint, pacem vocant*; when they have devoured, wasted, and trampled down all before them, so that there is none indeed so much as left to resist, that they call peace. But certainly neither are the peace-makers blessed, nor is the peace a blessing, that is procured by such dismal methods of total ruin and desolation. And thus much for the forbearance of hostility in point of prevention or provocation.

(2.) In the next place, there is required also a forbearance of all hostile actions, as to retaliation. I shall not run forth into the common place about revenge, it being a subject large and important enough to be treated of in a discourse by itself. But this I shall say, that according to the weights and measures by which Christianity judges of things and actions, he that revenges an injury will be found as truly a malefactor, in the court of heaven, as he that does one. And he that requires "an eye for eye, and a tooth for a tooth," is a Jew, and not a Christian; a person of a mean spirit and a gross notion, unacquainted with the sublimity and spirituality of so refined and excellent a religion.

A peaceable deportment is one of the great duties enjoined in it: and the rule and measure of that is to be charity, of which divine quality the apostle tells us in 1 Cor. xiii. 7, that it "suffers all things, hopes all things, endures all things." The very genius and nature of Christianity consists in this, that it is a passive religion; a religion that composes the mind to quietness, upon the hardest and the most irksome terms and conditions. And the truth is, if it drives on a design of peace, we shall find, that the consequences of revenge make as great a breach upon that as a first defiance and provocation. For were not this answered with resistance and retribution, it would perhaps exhale and vanish; and the peace would at least be preserved on one side. For be the injurious person never so quarrelsome, yet the quarrel must

fall, if the injured person will not fight. ~~Fire~~ sometimes goes out as much for want of being stirred up, as for want of fuel. And therefore he that can remit nothing, nor recede, nor sacrifice the prosecution of a small dispensable right to the preservation of peace, understands not the full dimensions and latitude of this great duty; nor remembers that he himself is ruined for ever, should God deal with him upon the same terms.

The great God must relax his law, and recede from some of his rights; and every day be willing to put up and connive at many wrongs, or I am sure it is impossible for him to be at peace with us. He shines upon his enemies, and drops the dew of heaven upon the base and the unthankful. And in this very instance of perfection, Matt. v. 48, he recommends himself to our imitation.

If revenge were no sin, forgiveness of injuries could be no duty. But Christ has made it a grand and a peculiar one; indeed so great, as to suspend the whole business of our justification upon it, in Matt. xviii. 35. And in the foregoing verses of that chapter, treating of the unmerciful servant, who exacted a debt from his poor fellow-servant, we find that "his lord was wroth with him, and delivered him to the tormentors." Neither could it have profited him to have said, that he exacted but what was lawfully his own; what was due to him upon the best and the clearest terms of propriety. No; this excused not the rigour of a merciless proceeding from him, who had but newly tasted of mercy, and being pardoned a thousand talents, remorselessly and unworthily took his fellow by the throat for a hundred pence.

It is or may be the case of every one of us. We pray every day for forgiveness; nay, we are so hardy as to pray that God would "forgive us just so as we forgive others;" and yet oftentimes we can be sharp, furious, and revengeful; prosecute every supposed injury heartily and bitterly; and think we do well and generously not to yield nor relent: and what is the strangest thing in the world, notwithstanding an express and loud declaration of God to the contrary, all this time we look to be saved by mercy; and, like Saul, to be caught into heaven, while we are breathing nothing but persecution, blood, and revenge.

But as to the great duty of peaceableness which we have been discoursing of, we must know, that he who affronts and injures his brother breaks the peace; but withal that he who owns and repays the ill turn, perpetuates the breach. By the former, a sin is only born into the world, but by the latter it is brought up, nourished, and maintained. And perhaps the greatest unquietness of human affairs is not so much chargeable upon the injurious, as the revengeful. The first undoubtedly has the greater guilt; but the other causes the greater disturbance. As a storm could not be so hurtful, were it not for the opposition of trees and houses; it ruins no where, but where it is withstood and repelled. It has indeed the same force when it passes over the

rush, or the yielding osier: but it does not roar nor become dreadful, till it grapples with the oak, and rattles upon the tops of the cedars. And thus I have shown the first thing included in a peaceable behaviour, viz. a forbearance of hostile actions, and that both as to provocation and retaliation. But whether all kind of retaliation be absolutely unlawful, shall be inquired into afterwards.

2. The other thing that goes to constitute a peaceable behaviour, is a forbearance of injurious, provoking words. I know none that has or deserves a reputation, but tenders the defence of it as much as of his person or estate. And perhaps it has as great an influence upon his contents and emoluments, as both of them. It is that which makes him considerable in society. He is owned by his friends, and cannot be trampled upon by his enemies. Even those that will not love him, will yet in some manner respect him. For till the enclosures of a man's good name are broken down, there cannot be a total waste made upon his fortunes.

Upon this it is, that abusive language, by which properly a man's repute is invaded, is by all men deservedly looked upon as an open defiance, and proclaiming of war with such a person: and consequently, that the reviler is as great a disturber as an armed enemy; who usually invades a man in that which is much less dear unto him. Rabshakeh broke the peace with Hezekiah as much by his railing, as by the army that besieged him. And he that flings dirt at a man affronts him as much as he that flings a stone at him. A wound upon the skin is sometimes sooner got off than a spot upon the clothes.

I would fain know, what man almost there is, that does not resent an ugly reflexive word, with more acrimony and impatience, than he would the stab of a poniard. He remembers it more tenaciously, prosecutes it more thoroughly, and forgets it much more difficultly. And the reason is, because a blow or a wound directs an evil only to a man's person, but an ill word designs him a wider calamity; it endeavours the propagation and spreading of his unhappiness, and would render him miserable as far as he is known. Besides, it hurts him so as to put the reparation of that hurt absolutely out of his power: for it lodges his infamy in other men's thoughts and opinions, which he cannot command or come at, so as to rectify and disabuse them. But admit that the defamed person by a blameless and a virtuous deportment wipes off and confutes the calumny, and clears himself in the esteem of men; yet it is of those only with whom the scene of his converse lies: but in the mean time the slander spreads and flies abroad; and many hundreds come to hear the ill words, by which the man is abused, who never come to see his own behaviour, by which he is righted.

I conclude therefore, that this great duty of living peaceably

is not consummate, without a constant and a careful suppression of all offensive and provoking speeches. And he who does not acquit himself in this instance of a Christian behaviour, will find hereafter, that men will meet with as certain a condemnation for what they have said, as for what they have done.

And thus much for the first general thing proposed for the handling of the words: namely, to show what was implied in the duty enjoined in them. I pass now to

II. The second, which is to consider, *what are the measures and proportions by which it is to be determined.* And those are expressed in these words: "If it be possible, live peaceably." Now *possible* may be taken two ways.

1st. As it is opposed to naturally impossible, and that which cannot be done. Which sense cannot be here intended, as being supposed in all just and reasonable commands. For none can rationally command or advise a man to that which is not naturally within his power, as has been already observed.

2dly. It may be taken as it is opposed to morally impossible, and that which cannot be done lawfully: for it is a maxim in the civil law, *Id possumus quod jure possumus*; which was the sense of Joseph's answer to his mistress, in Gen. xxxix. 9, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" and of that of the apostle, 2 Cor. xiii. 8, "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." In both which places, not the *possibility*, but the *lawfulness* of the action is specified; and that is the sense here intended.

But now the observance of peace being limited by the measure of lawful, it follows, that where the breaking of the peace is not unlawful, there the maintaining of it ceases to be a necessary duty. It is of some moment therefore to satisfy ourselves when it is lawful, and when unlawful to break the peace. And all inquiries concerning this are reducible to these two.

1. Whether it can at all be lawful?

2. Supposing that it may be lawful, when and where it ought to be judged so?

Under the first of these I shall discuss that great question, Whether war can be lawful for Christians? Under the second, I shall show those general grounds that may authorize a war, and from thence descend to the resolution of particular cases. As,

(1.) Whether it can be lawful to break peace with the magistrate?

(2.) Whether it may be lawful for one private man to make war upon another, in those encounters which we commonly call duels?

(3.) Whether it be lawful for a man to repel force with force, so as to kill another in his own defence?

(4.) And lastly, since the prosecution of another in courts of



judicature, is in its kind a breach of the mutual bond of peace, I shall inquire whether it be allowable for Christians to go to law one with another?

All these things admit of much doubt and dispute; and yet, being matters of common and daily occurrence, it concerns us to have a right judgment of them.

1. I shall begin with the first question, which is concerning the lawfulness of war, in order to the resolution of which, I shall premise what it is. War may be properly defined, a state of hostility, or mutual acts of annoyance, either for the preservation of the public from some mischief intended, or in the vindication of it for some mischief already done to it.

The ground of war therefore is some public hurt or mischief; and since this may be twofold, either intended or actually done, there are accordingly two distinct kinds of war, defensive or offensive.

1st. Defensive is in order to keep off and repel an evil designed to the public; and therefore is properly an act of self-preservation.

2dly. Offensive is for the revenging a public injury done to a community, and so is properly an act of justice.

It is clear, therefore, that the lawfulness and justness of war is founded upon the justness of its cause: and this being once found out, and rightly stated, I affirm, that it is allowable before God to cease from peace, and to enter into a state of war; and that upon the strength of these arguments:

(1.) That which is a genuine, natural, and necessary consequence derived from one of the chief principles of the law of nature, that is lawful: but so is war, namely, from the principles of self-preservation, the noblest and the most acknowledged of all those principles, by which nature regulates and governs the actions of the creature. *Hoc et ratio doctis, necessitas barbaris, feris natura ipsa præscripsit, ut omnem semper vim quâcunque ope possint, à corpore, à capite, à vitâ suâ propulsarent.* Cicero, in his Defence of Milo. And that self-preservation cannot be maintained without war, is too evident to be proved. The Jews, when they were set upon by their enemies on the sabbath day, and then murdered and massacred, because they thought it unlawful to make any resistance, or to defend themselves on that day, have transmitted the sad truth of this assertion in bloody letters to posterity.

That men will sometimes invade the rights and the lives of others, is certain; and it is also as certain, that the naked breast is not the surest armour, nor patience the best weapon of defence.

Do we expect a rescue from heaven? and that God should send down fire from the clouds, and work miracles for our preservation? Experience sufficiently convinces us that such an

expectation is vain. God delivers men by means, when means are to be had, and by the interposal of their own endeavours: and therefore he that flies to the church, when he should be in the field, and takes his prayer-book in his hand, when he should take his sword, tempts God and loses himself; and, according to a due estimate of things, becomes a murderer, by so patiently suffering another to be so.

*Victrix patientia* is a puff and a metaphor; and may, perhaps, in the issue of things, bear a man through a domestic injury or a private affront; but I never read that it put an army to flight, or rebated the courage or controlled the invasion of a fighting enemy.

Besides, patience is properly the suffering quietly when God in his providence calls us to suffer; but it is not a suffering when God calls us to act and to stand upon our own defence. As in some men we see it usual to veil their cowardice and pusillanimity with the names of prudence and moderation; so that which some call patience, will be once found nothing else but a lazy relinquishment of the rights and privileges of their nature; and that a life and a being was much cast away upon such as would not exert the utmost power they had to defend it. This argument is properly for defensive war.

(2.) The second is for offensive; and it proceeds thus: That which is a proper act of retributive justice is lawful; but such a thing is war, it being a retribution of punishment for a public hurt or injury done by one nation to another. That he who does a wrong should suffer for it, is a thing required by justice, the execution of which is committed to the supreme power of every nation: and why justice may not be done upon a company of malefactors defending themselves with arms, as well as upon any particular thief or murderer, brought shackled and disarmed to the block or the gallows, I cannot understand.

The case in a civil war is clear between a magistrate assisted by his subjects, against another rebel part of his subjects. for he being the supreme power, the right of punishing offenders, whether single or in companies, is undoubtedly in him. But since to punish is properly an act of a superior to an inferior, and two kingdoms or nations seem to be equal, and neither to have any superiority or jurisdiction over the other, it may be doubted, how the one's making war upon the other can be properly an act of punitive justice?

To this I answer, that though these two kingdoms or states be in themselves equal, yet the injury received gives the injured people a right of claiming a reparation from those that did the injury; and consequently, in that respect, gives them a kind of superiority over the other. For, in point of right, still the injured person is superior: and the reason is, because common justice is concerned in his behalf; to whose rules all nations in

the world owe a real subjection. If it were not for war, therefore, there could be no provision made of doing justice upon an offending nation: justice would only prey upon particular persons; but national robberies, national murders, must pass in triumph, with the reputation of virtues, as high and great actions, above the control of those common rules that govern the particular members of societies. In a word, society could not consist, if it were not lawful for one nation to exact a compensation for the injuries done to it by another; and, upon the refusal of such compensation, to endeavour it by force and acts of hostility. Wherefore I conclude, that war must needs be just, when the instrument of its management is the sword of justice. And this argument is for offensive war.

But before I dismiss it, there is one doubt that may require resolution, and it is this; that admitting that an injured nation may lawfully make war upon the nation that injured it, yet is it lawful for the injurious nation, being thus justly assaulted by war, also to defend itself?

I answer, that it is; and that upon this ground, that be a man's delinquency against the laws of society never so great, yet, as long as he retains the nature of a man, he also retains the natural right of self-defence and preservation; unless where, by his own consent, he has quitted it.

But you will say, a particular malefactor is bound to resign up his life to the punishment of the law without resistance: and the case, as to this, seems to be the same in a particular malefactor and an injurious nation; war being a doing of justice upon one, as the execution of the gallows is upon the other: and consequently the obligation to a non-resistance seems to be the same in both. I answer, that the case is very different; and that upon this reason, that a particular member of a commonwealth has consented and submitted to the laws of the nation of which he is a member, which laws enjoin malefactors to surrender up their lives to justice without resistance; whereupon, the right of resisting is lost by his own consent. But now there is no law imposed upon one nation by another, or owned and submitted to by any nation, that obliges it, for having done an injury to another nation, without resistance to endure the effects of war and a hostile invasion; whereupon it still keeps the right of defending itself against all opposition, how just soever it be on their sides that make it.

(3.) The third argument is for all kind of war indifferently; and it runs thus: If St. John the Baptist, Christ himself, and the apostles, judged the employment of a soldier lawful, then war is lawful. The consequence is apparent; for every employment is lawful or unlawful, according to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of the actions to which it is designed: an employment being indeed nothing else but a constant engaging of a man's self

in such or such a way of action. And now for the assumption, that St. John the Baptist, Christ himself, and the apostles, judged the life and employment of a soldier lawful, it shall be made appear particularly.

And first, for St. John the Baptist; it was his great office to be the preacher of repentance, and to consign it with the great sacrament of baptism: upon which it is rational to conclude, that he admitted none to baptism without declaring to them what ~~sins~~ they were to repent of. And since the sum of his doctrine was, that men should bring forth fruits worthy of repentance; when any men asked him what they were to do, to fulfil this great command, it is most consonant to reason to judge, that his answer taught them all that was included in that duty, and showed them whatsoever was inconsistent with it. But now, when the soldiers, amongst others, asked John, what they should do, Luke iii. 14, he speaks nothing at all of laying down their employment; but rather confirms that, by prescribing rules to them how they should manage it: as, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any one falsely, and be content with your wages." In short, it is not imaginable that the great forerunner of the Messias, even one of the greatest persons that was born of women, should busy himself to instruct men how they should lawfully manage such an employment as was in itself absolutely unlawful; and to countenance men to receive wages for a work that he judged highly impious and unjust.

In the next place, for the judgment of Christ and his apostles about this matter; the first we have in Matt. viii. 10, where Christ, speaking of the centurion, said, that "he had not found so much faith, no, not in Israel." And the like is testified of Cornelius the centurion, in Acts x. 1, 2, that he was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house."

From whence I argue thus: He whose faith Christ commended, and he to whom the Spirit of God bore this testimony, that he was "a devout man, and feared God," could neither of them be engaged in a course of life absolutely unlawful; otherwise saving faith and the fear of God would be consistent with a settled, constant, resolved living in sin. For he whose employment is sinful, sins habitually, and with a witness; and we might, with as much propriety of speech and truth in divinity, commend the faith of a highway-man, and say a devout bawd and a devout cheat, as a devout centurion. I conclude, therefore, that war is a thing in itself lawful and allowable, and that the proof of it stands firm, both upon the principles of nature and the principles of Christianity. And being so, it is a great wonder that Faustus Socinus and his school, in other things too partial defenders of nature, should yet in this so undeservedly desert it, as to assert all war to be utterly unlawful; not indeed, by virtue of the law of nature, or of Moses, but of Christ, who,

they say, has perfected the two former, and superadded higher and more sublime precepts.

But still I cannot see that this sect of men are able to quit themselves from the charge of very great unreasonableness in this assertion. For in those truths that concern the theory of the Christian religion, as about the Trinity and the like, they vehemently contend that all scriptures, howsoever in the clearest appearance of natural construction looking that way, yet ought to be interpreted and brought down to the analogy and rules of natural reason. But here, in the highest concerns of practice, in which men's lives and fortunes, their being and well-being are immediately interested, they strip men of all the rights of nature, and that under pretence of such an injunction from the Christian religion. It concerns us therefore to inquire into their arguments; which we shall do, first, by examining the general ground upon which they stand; and then by traversing those several scriptures which these men allege in the behalf of their opinion.

1. First of all then, they lay this as the foundation of all their arguings in this particular, that God under the Mosaical covenant made only promises of temporal possessions and blessings to his people; and therefore giving them a temporal Canaan, it was necessary that he should allow them the means of defending it, which was properly by war, and repulsing their temporal enemies: but now under the covenant of grace, established by the mediatorship of Christ with the world, God has made no express promise of any temporal enjoyments or felicities; but rather, on the contrary, bids us despise and take our minds wholly off from them. And therefore, according to the tenor of such a covenant, he has made no provision to secure his people in any such temporalities, but taken from them all right of war and resistance.

To this, which is a proposition current through the main body of the Socinian divinity, I answer, that it is both false in itself, and as to the present purpose hugely inconclusive.

For first, it is to be denied that God transacted with his people, under the Mosaical covenant, only in temporal promises: he did indeed, according to the thick genius of that people, too much intent upon worldly happiness, express and shadow forth spiritual blessings under temporal; but that they had hopes, and consequently promises of a better life after this, is clear from sundry places, as particularly that in Psalm lxxiii. 24, where David says to God, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel here, and afterward receive me to glory." And it is clear from all the foregoing verses, that by the guidance of God's counsel, he understood God's favour to him throughout all the whole compass of his life. But more fully in Heb. xi. 13, where the divine author, speaking of the ancient heroes before the times of the gospel, says, that "they all died in the faith, not having received the promises,

but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." What could be said more fully and expressly to show the insolence of that assertion, that by taking from the Mosaical church all promise of future blessedness, would degrade them to the rank of brutes and swine, and epicures, who live only by this beastly principle: Let us eat and drink to-day, for to-morrow we shall die.

And further, it is also false, that God has under the covenant of grace made no temporal provision for the persons under it. For what mean those words of Christ, Matt. vi. 33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you." God indeed did **not** design these temporals as parts of the great promised blessing, as he did under the Mosaical covenant, but only as appendages and concomitants of it, that so he might show the spiritual nature of this covenant to be much above that of the other: but still it follows not but God has made an allowance of temporal necessities under the second covenant, though not in the same manner and upon the same terms that he did under the first. It is clear therefore, that the contrary proposition is false; and that it is as weak in the nature of an argument, as it is false in the nature of a proposition, is no less manifest.

For if the only reason that made war lawful to the Jews, was because it was a means to secure them in the possession of their temporal Canaan, against the invasion and incursions of the enemy, then when there was no such incursion or invasion, it ceased to be lawful: this is a natural inference. But the contrary is evident: for we know that they commenced a lawful war against the tribe of Benjamin, their brethren, in which there could be no pretence either of securing or enlarging the borders of the promised land; but only a just revenge acted upon them, for a black and villanous trespass upon the laws of common justice and humanity.

And then for the Christian church; suppose they should have no federal or spiritual right to their earthly possessions, yet they have a civil and a natural right; which right they may accordingly defend: since, by virtue of the covenant of grace, to have a title to heaven; and withal to have a civil and temporal claim to their earthly estates; and further, to maintain that claim against the violence of an enemy; are not at all opposite or contrary one to the other, but very fairly subordinate.

But that I may thoroughly pluck up this false foundation, grounded upon the difference of the two covenants, I shall observe this: that since in the former covenant there were some things of moral and external right, some things only of positive institution, peculiarly made for and restrained to the church and commonwealth of the Jews; whatsoever alterations and abrogations have been made by Christ under the second covenant,

were only of those positive laws, peculiar and proper to the Jews; all other things, which depended upon the eternal and immutable laws and rights of nature, remaining inviolately the same under both covenants, and as unchanged as nature itself. Now such a thing I affirm the right of war to be, as being the result and dictate of that grand natural right of self-preservation. It is the voice of reason and nature, that we should defend our persons from assassination, and our estates from violence; and he that seeks for rescue from any thing but a vigorous resistance, will find himself wronged to that degree, that it will be too late for him to be righted.

Having thus removed the false ground of the arguments proving the utter unlawfulness of war; I come now to see what countenance this opinion receives from scripture; from which the abettors of it argue thus: If we are expressly commanded, "not to resist evil, but being smitten on the right cheek, to turn the other also," as in Matt. v. 39; and to "recompense no man evil for evil," nor to "avenge ourselves, but rather to give place to wrath," as in Rom. xii. 17, 19. If also we are commanded to "love our enemies," as in the same Matt. v., then war, which includes in it the clean contrary, is utterly unlawful.

Before I answer these particular scriptures, I shall premise this: What if we should answer Socinus in his own words? who in his book *De Jesu Christo Servatore*, disputing against Covelus for the disproving of Christ's satisfaction, has the hardiness to say, that the word *satisfaction* is not to be found in scripture: which is true. But supposing that it were; yet it being, in his judgment, contrary to right reason, it was not, he says, to be admitted in the sense naturally signified by it. So say I; these scriptures indeed, however they prohibit self-defence, yet this being contrary to the light of nature and right reason, they are not to be admitted in their proper signification. Surely this, though it were a bold and a profane speech, yet to him it were a very full answer, who makes the very same plea upon a parallel occasion.

But we shall not need such refuges. To those scriptures therefore, I answer, that they are to be understood only of private revenge acted by one particular man upon another, and not of a public, managed by the authority of the magistrate: but such a revenge only is war. That the words are so to be understood is clear, as the occasion of those in Matt. v. shows: for Christ's design was to beat down that corrupt and false gloss of the pharisees upon the law, who taught that it was lawful for any private man to right and revenge himself with his own hands; provided that he observed the just measure of equality between the evil which he suffered, and the evil which he returned: whereas indeed Moses committed the execution of this law of retaliation only to the magistrate. Hereupon Christ tells

them, that it was the duty of private men not to resist evil, nor to revenge themselves, but being smitten upon one cheek to turn the other; which words are not literally to be understood, for neither Christ himself nor the apostle Paul so behaved themselves: but being smitten upon the face, they expostulated the injury of the blow, John xviii. 23, and Acts xxiii. 3. But they are only a hyperbolical speech, prescribing a very great degree of patience and composure of mind; and that of the two, we should rather choose, having received one injurious blow, to offer ourselves to another, than to sin against God by revenging it.

But that this prohibition of revenge, further urged in Rom. xii. 19, concerns only private men, and not absolutely damns all kind of revenge, acted by a public person, is manifest; for not above six verses off, namely, in ch. xiii. 4, the apostle is so far from denying this to the magistrate, that he tells us it is the very design of his office: and that "he beareth not the sword in vain;" as, being "the minister of God, a revenger, to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." We cannot therefore make the apostle to forbid all revenge, without a gross and a palpable contradicting of himself. But besides, as touching revenge, which is properly a retaliation, or repaying one evil for another, that this is not a thing in its nature unlawful, is invincibly proved by this: that God, by an express law, under the Mosaical economy, committed the exercise of it to the magistrate. But were it a thing in the very nature of it unjust, God could not so much as permit or allow the practice of it, much less countenance it by a law.

As for the next injunction, of "loving our enemies," I answer; 1. That it is there directed by Christ to particular persons, not public bodies or whole nations. 2. But secondly, admitting that it extends to these also, yet I assume that the love here commanded is not properly a love of friendship, but a love of charity; which consists in a freedom from any malice to, or hatred of, our enemies' persons: and this may continue and be maintained, even while a man, either in the defence or vindication of his country, kills his adversary in the field. For I suppose a judge may be in charity with a malefactor while he condemns him; and the executioner have no design of hatred to him whom, by the duty of his office, he makes a sacrifice to common justice.

The case is the same in war; where, when a man kills another, it is not because he has not a love of charity to his person, but because he is bound to love his prince and his country with a greater.



## SERMON XVIII.

## PART II.

## ROMANS XII. 18.

*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

2. THE second argument to prove the unlawfulness of all war, is taken from that prophecy in Isaiah ii. 4, where it is said of those that shall live in the times of the gospel, that they shall "beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks;" and "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

*Answ.* But to this I answer, 1. That prophecies only foretell the future event of things, but determine nothing concerning either the lawfulness or unlawfulness of those things. 2. If these words are understood literally, that after the coming of the Messias war shall every where cease; then they prove nothing, but what the Jews pretend to prove by them, which is, that Jesus Christ is not the Messias; forasmuch as since his coming we have seen no such thing as a general cessation of war over the world.

For the explication of this place therefore we must observe; that in scripture, things have those effects ascribed to them which they have a natural fitness to produce; though by accident, and other impediments, they never actually produce them. Thus, because the gospel delivers such precepts to the world, which if men would live up to there would certainly ensue such a universal peace and tranquillity; therefore the production of such a peace is ascribed to the gospel, though, through the vice and corruption of men, the case of things fall out to be much otherwise.

But it may be replied, that then, however, those who obey and live up to the precepts of the gospel, ought to abstain from all war; whence it follows, that according to those precepts, war is unlawful.

I answer, that upon supposition of such an absolute obedience to the doctrine of Christ, war indeed would not be lawful, because the very ground and occasion of it would be taken away, by the inoffensive behaviour of one man towards another. But the dispute is here concerning what is lawful to be done when the generality of the world live not according to the tenor of this doctrine, but invade the rights of others. In which case

I affirm, that the gospel tends not from any the privileges of a natural defence, and the prosecution of justice in a lawful war. As for instance, the gospel, as much as any doctrine can do, makes provision that there should be no thieves or murderers in the world, by a prohibition of those unhallowed courses: but yet when it falls out that men obey not those prohibitions, but engage in such practices, surely it does not strip the magistrate of all right to animadvert upon such offenders, but leaves the axe as sharp and the gibbet as strong as ever it was under the law. This exception therefore concludes nothing.

But then by the way, for the further clearing of the text from the Jews' objection, raised out of it against Jesus Christ's being the Messias; besides what has been said, I add further, as to the very literal impletion of the prophecy, that when it is foretold that a thing shall come to pass in the time of the gospel, it is not necessary to understand that it must happen immediately upon the introduction of it, and to be always to be found in the world during the continuance of the gospel: but it is sufficient if it come to pass and be fulfilled in any period of it. And who knows, but before the world ends God may give the gospel such a progress over the earth, and withal such a mighty influence upon the hearts of those that profess it, that there may be such a universal peace to be seen amongst all nations, and such glorious halcyon days, as the very literal purport of these prophecies seems to exhibit to us. From whence I infer, that we must first see an end of all things, before the Jews' objection can be admitted to prove what it does intend.

3. The third argument for the unlawfulness of war, is taken from that place in Matt. xxvi. 52, where Christ commanding Peter to put up his sword, tells him, that "all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword." From whence it follows, that since Christ allowed not his disciple the use of the sword, and that upon such an occasion as the defence of his master, and him also the Lord and Saviour of the world, certainly he would not allow of it as lawful upon any other occasion whatsoever. To this I answer, that the sense and meaning of every speech is to be limited to the subject-matter of it, and also to be measured by that which first occasioned the utterance of it. Now Christ reprehends Peter, because that by an unwarranted though perhaps a well-meaning zeal, and without any leave, either had or asked from Christ himself, he flew upon the high-priest's servant in that manner. The words therefore, howsoever uttered in general terms, signify only thus much; that those who without any call or warrant from the lawful superior power, but merely by the instigation of a hot zeal, and a hotter head, shall presume to use the sword, such "shall perish by the sword." But this concludes nothing against the lawfulness of those men's waging war, who come to it armed with the authentic call of the

supreme magistrate, to whom God has committed the defence of the subject and the administration of justice. It is indeed a dagger in the throat of their cause, who can dare to raise armies, ruin countries, and subvert governments, upon no other commission, than the impulse of a furious ambition and a pretended inspiration.

4. The fourth and last argument for the unlawfulness of war may be framed thus: that which proceeds from a sinful cause, and produces sinful, unlawful effects, that itself is unlawful. But so does war. For the sinfulness of its cause, we have an account of that in James iv. 1, "Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts?" And for the unlawfulness of its effects, we need only survey our own experience, without recurring to any further histories to inform us, what dismal cruelties, rapines, and outrages are the constant inseparable attendants of war. Now for that which issues from so evil a beginning, and draws after it such evil consequences, it is certainly very strange if it should not be in a high degree evil itself. But to this I answer:

(1.) As for that place of St. James, it speaks only of personal quarrels and dissensions between particular men, and not of national hostilities managed by the public conduct of the magistrate; which only is the thing here disputed of.

(2.) But secondly, admit that the words may be extended to national hostilities and wars between people and people; yet the apostle speaks only of what usually are the causes of war; and not what are so of necessity and according to the nature of the thing itself: which, though on one side they are unlawful, namely on that which gives the offence; yet on the other, the causes of it are not always men's lusts; but a rational defence of their country, and a due vindication of public justice.

In a word, it is one thing to speak of war, as actually it uses to be managed, and another to speak of it as it ought and may be managed. And this affords also an answer to the second part of the argument, concerning those sad and sinful effects that follow it, as unjust violences, rapines, cruelties, and the like. Of all which it is to be said, that they proceed only from the corruption and vice of those who manage it, but are utterly extraneous to the nature of war, considered precisely in itself. I know no action so good and allowable but may derive a contagion by passing through ill hands. But we are not to judge of the nature of any thing or action, by that which is only accidental to it. The nature of war consists properly either in the repelling of an intended, or the revenging of a received injury. But whether this be done with unjust rapines and hideous cruelties upon the innocent, or duly and justly, the nature of war is still the same: the quality is indeed altered from just to unjust, but that amounts to no more than the ill performing of a thing in itself indifferent.

And thus I have answered all the arguments that to me seem to be of any moment to prove the absolute unlawfulness of all war; upon the strength of which answers, I think I may reckon upon it as a proved assertion, that war is not a thing in itself unlawful.

I suppose nobody will conclude the foregoing discourse to have been a commendation of war, much less an exhortation to it. It is indeed a lawful, but a sad remedy. And I think there is none who looks upon it as a sufficient argument to persuade him that the cutting off a leg or an arm is a desirable thing, because it is better to do so, than to have a gangrene spread itself over the whole body. Caustics and corrosives may be endured, but certainly the causes that make them necessary are not to be chosen. War can be desired only in the nature of a remedy, and a remedy always supposes an evil. And I know no argument so strong to prove the lawfulness of war, but that war itself is a stronger argument to prove the worth and the convenience of peace.

I have now done with the first general inquiry, concerning the measures by which the great duty of peaceableness is to be determined: which was, whether war could be at all lawful? I come now to the second, which is to inquire, upon supposition that it may be lawful, When and where it ought to be judged so? And here I shall,

First, Lay down some general grounds that may authorize war. And,

Secondly, Descend to the resolution of particular cases.

For the first of these, I shall lay these four general grounds of the lawfulness of it, premising first what is the nature of peace.

Peace is properly the mutual forbearance of acts of hostility or annoyance, in order to the preservation of our nature in all its due rights and capacities.

It is clear therefore, that peace is a means or instrument designed only to such an end. Now that ceasing to be able to compass this end, to which it is designed, ceases also to be an instrument or means, and consequently to engage us to use it: whereupon it is lawful to enter into a contrary estate, namely of hostility or war. From whence follow these assertions, as so many general grounds of it.

1. When those with whom we are at peace declare that they will annoy us, unless we cut off our limbs, and injure and mangle our bodies; and accordingly upon our refusal disturb us; as Nahash the Ammonite did to the men of Jabesh Gilead, offering them peace only upon condition that they would let him thrust out their right eyes, 1 Sam. xi. 2; it is in such a case lawful to repel and resist that force or disturbance. For every one has a right to preserve his limbs and the faculties of his nature.

2. When those with whom we are at peace declare war with

us, unless we will renounce our religion, and upon our refusal do so; which is the case of the pope's exposing the dominions of those whom he calls heretics to the invasion of other princes; it is then lawful to repel and resist that force or invasion. The reason is, because every man has a natural right to the use of that which he apprehends indispensably to conduce to his chiefest good: and that is his religion.

3. When one nation injures another to that degree, as to blast its honour and reputation; it is lawful to revenge that public breach of honour by a public war. The reason is, because the honour of a nation is as absolutely necessary to the welfare and support of it, as its trade or commerce; it being indeed the great instrument of both, and perhaps also of its very safety and vital subsistence: it being seldom known, that a government dishonoured and despised abroad, did long preserve itself in credit and respect at home.

4. When those with whom we are at peace declare war with us, unless we will quit our civil rights, as our estates and families, and the protection of the laws, and accordingly upon our refusal do so: it is lawful to enter into war with those who make such encroachments upon us. The reason is, because when civil societies are constituted and submitted to, every man so submitting to them has a natural right to the conveniences and enjoyments of such societies.

Now the foundation of the lawfulness of war in all the fore-mentioned cases is, because whatsoever a man has a lawful right to possess or enjoy, he has by consequence a right to use all those means which are absolutely necessary to the possession or enjoyment of that thing.

You will say now, that according to this doctrine, when the prince encroaches upon his subjects' bodies, estates, or religion, they may lawfully resist or oppose him.

This objection brings in the resolution of the first particular case proposed by us to be discussed, which is: Whether it be lawful for subjects in any case to make war upon the magistrate? My answer to it is in the negative. And the reason is, because the subject has resigned up all right of resistance into the hands of his prince and governor. And for this we must observe, that as every man has naturally a right to resist any one that shall annoy him in his lawful enjoyments; so he has a general natural right, by which he is master of all the particular rights of his nature, so as to retain them or recede from them, and give them away as he pleases. Now when a man consents to be a subject, and to acknowledge any one for his governor, he does by that very action invest him with all the necessary means of being a governor; the chief of which is, a quitting and parting with that natural right of resisting him upon any occasion whatsoever. And every man consents to have such a one his

governor, from whom he covenants to receive protection, and to whom he does not actually declare a non-subjection.

This being laid down, it follows, that it is not more natural for a man to resist another particular man, who would deprive him of his rights, than it is natural for him not to resist his prince upon the same occasion. Forasmuch as by a superior and general right of nature, he has parted with this particular right of resistance: and consequently having given his prince the propriety of it, he cannot any more use it, unless his prince should surrender it back to him again; which here is not supposed. And this is the ground upon which I judge a resistance of the supreme magistrate, both unlawful and irrational. But there have not been wanting in the world scholars to teach, as well as soldiers to act the contrary. Such as have weakened the ties of government, and shaken the supremacy of princes, by prescribing of cases in which this duty of nonresistance binds not the subject; and by which they are so discharged of their allegiance, as to be let loose to carve for themselves, and to restrain their superiors.

But before I come to survey any of their opinions, I shall premise this rule or maxim: that those whom the people have a right of proceeding against, so as to punish them by law; those also they may proceed against by war and open force, in case that legal course of proceeding be obstructed.

The reason is, because war is a remedy upon the default of law; and therefore where the coercive power of the law cannot have its effect, war is to take place, and supply the want of it: *Ubi judicia desinunt, incipit bellum*, says Grotius, in his second book *De Jure Belli*, cap. i. sect. 2. Upon which ground it is, that one private man cannot revenge an injury upon another by open force; the law being open for him to right himself by; but one nation may by force and war revenge an injury done to it by another nation; because there is no provision of a coercive power stated by a law between them, by which one nation may implead the other, and so have a reparation of an injury made it by the sentence of a common judge. Now I premise this observation to show, that whosoever teaches that the people may judicially proceed against and punish their prince, the same person does by consequence affirm that the people may also take up arms against him, when they cannot otherwise bring him to such a judicial process.

This being observed, I cannot but set before you those several cases assigned by Grotius in his first book *De Jure Belli*, and fourth chapter, in which he asserts it lawful for the people to proceed against their prince. As,

(1.) When according to the professed constitution of the government, the prince is accountable to the people, as in Lacedæmon, where the people owned a coercive power over their king, which power they deposited in the hands of their ephori; who, by virtue thereof, restrained the king at the people's pleasure.

(2.) When a prince quits and relinquishes all right of government: after which action, he says, the prince may be dealt withal as any other private man.

(3.) When he would transfer and alienate the right of government to another; in which endeavour, he says, the subjects may hinder, and by force resist him.

(4.) When he actually attempts the destruction of all his people.

(5.) When he holds the grant of the sovereignty from the people upon conditions, and fails in the fulfilling of those conditions.

(6.) When the prince holds but part of the supreme power, the senate or people holding the other part: in which case, if the prince invades that part of the sovereign power not belonging to him, those, to whom that part does belong, may resist him. According to this doctrine, those amongst us who taught that the king was one of the three estates, and that the parliament was a power coordinate with him, did by consequence teach, that in some cases they might make war upon him; and their practice was not short of their doctrine.

(7.) When, in the conferring of the sovereignty to a prince, the people declare, that in certain cases it shall be lawful for them to resist him: and the reason is, because he who transfers his right to another, may transfer it upon what terms or under what reserves he thinks fit. This seems of near affinity with the fifth instance, but it is not altogether the same: for the former is suspended upon the prince's not doing of something which he conditioned to do; but this speaks not of the prince's action, but of some events of affairs, under which the people put in caution, that their subjection to him should cease.

These aphorisms I had rather rehearse than animadvert upon; the great reputation of the author making all censures upon him, though perhaps true, yet unhandsome. But the foundation which he had laid a little before, in the seventh section of the same chapter, seems large enough to bear all these superstructures, and many more. For proposing the question, Whether the law of not resisting the magistrate binds the subject in a great, imminent, and extreme danger? he answers, that most laws, human and divine, though running in absolute terms, yet imply a condition of relaxation in cases of extremity. And for this law, of not resisting the magistrate, he says it sprung first from the consent of the people, who for the benefits of government and society, resigned themselves up to the absolute disposal of a sovereign; which people, he says, had they been asked whether they would have chosen rather to die, than in any case whatsoever to resist their sovereign with an armed power, he conceives they would never have owned that to have been their will and intention; and consequently, that the

sense of that law, which is to be measured by the sense of those from whose consent it took force, ought still to be supposed to imply an exception in cases of extreme danger. And accordingly he concludes, in page 87, that for his part he could not condemn a people, under such a danger, so defending themselves: that is, by a resistance of the magistrate; for that is the thing that he is debating of expressly, and exemplifies it by the Maccabees defending themselves with an army against Antiochus.

This assertion, I am apt to think, in the full improvement of it, would widen itself to a very strange latitude. But thus much may be said for this author, that he breathed a popular air, and lived a member of a commonwealth, which needed such maxims as these to justify its being so.

But David Paræus has, with a much more barefaced impudence, flown in the face of sovereignty, in a set and long dispute upon Rom. xiii., a strange text, one would think, to preach rebellion upon. His arguments therefore I shall briefly examine and remove, and so conclude this question.

The whole discourse stands upon these two propositions.

*Prop.* 1. The first is, that it is lawful for the inferior magistrates to resist and punish the supreme; and some of the cases in which they may do so are these. 1. If he blasphemes God, or causes others to do so. 2. If he does the subjects some great injury. His words are, *Si ipsis fiat atrox injuria*; a term of a very large comprehension, and it is hard if any pretence cannot clothe itself with this name. 3. If the subjects cannot freely enjoy their lives, estates, and consciences.

This, I say, subverts all government; for if the prince may be punished, it follows,

(1.) That he is not supreme; for all punishment, as such, is an act of the superior upon the inferior.

(2.) If the inferior magistrates may punish him, then they may also judge when he is to be punished; and consequently the prince is never secure, since it is in their power to judge this when they think fit; and they will undoubtedly think it fit, when they find it for their advantage.

His reasons for this doctrine are principally these two.

1. He lays down this division: kings are absolute, or by compact; and subjoins, that there is none in Europe but is by compact, and upon conditions. Upon this he reasons thus; that such a prince, violating the conditions upon which he holds the sovereignty, may be judged by the people or senate that made him prince, upon those conditions.

To this I answer, first, that those who hold the supremacy upon any such conditional grant, upon default of these conditions, may indeed be made accountable to their people; but then I deny that either the kings of England, France, or Spain, hold their kingdoms by any such compact. Yet, because the kings of England



take an oath at their coronation to govern by such and such laws, which, in case they should not, Milton, and such others, are so bold as to absolve the subject from his allegiance; I shall, to dash that puritan, antimonarchical tenet, lay down this distinction, that it is one thing for a king to promise to manage his kingly office according to such rules, and another thing to take upon him the kingly office upon condition that he so governs: it is this latter only that would render him accountable to his people; but the former, if not fulfilled, is not breach of an antecedent condition, but only breach of a subsequent promise, for the sin of which he is answerable only to God.

2. The other reason for the inferior magistrates' resisting the supreme is this; because they are joined with him as associates in the government, and God has committed the defence of the people to them in their order; by virtue of which commission, they are to defend them against the supreme magistrate himself, if a tyrant, as well as against any other: forasmuch as being entrusted with the people's defence, it matters not who the persons are, against whom they are to be defended.

But to this the answer is ready, by a positive denial of that false and base principle, that the inferior magistrates are associates with the supreme; and that God immediately commissions them to govern and defend the people. For they are not the prince's associates, but his instruments in government, and have no power but what they receive immediately from him; and that he who acts by authority from another, cannot by that authority act against him, whose will and gift is the alone cause of that authority, is too clear to need any proof.

It would be too long particularly to insist upon his other reasons to this purpose; I shall reduce them therefore to general heads, annexing to each their respective solutions.

(1.) He argues from several scripture instances; as Ehud killing Eglon, and Jehu killing Joram.

(2.) From many instances of the heathens, as the Romans deposing Tarquinius.

(3.) From several speeches of princes, acknowledging a kind of dependence upon, and an accountableness to their people. To which I answer,

(1.) For those scripture instances and examples, that most of them are set down without any approbation or disapprobation, but only by a bare historical narration; and withal that the honesty of the person does not legalize every one of his actions. And perhaps it can no more be said, that to depose or kill a prince is just, because Ehud and Jehu did it, than because David left Solomon in charge to revenge an old injury upon Shimei, a man may now-a-days, having pardoned an injury, yet justly cause his son to revenge it. Add to this, that those persons are said to have done what they did by an especial commission or warrant from God; which men now-a-days cannot pretend to.

(2.) In the next place, to his allegation of the example of the Romans, I answer, that it was unlawful, and that to use it here is to prove the lawfulness of one rebellion by another.

(3.) And for those several speeches and concessions of princes, acknowledging their right at the people's dispose, I answer, that we are not to judge of the right of princes by what they may sometimes speak in flattery, upon design, or necessity. Besides, that the concessions this or that prince makes from his own right, cannot prejudice or infringe the right of others. And thus much for Paræus's first proposition, by which we see how he has armed inferior magistrates, as sheriffs, bailiffs, constables, and the like, against their prince; and it is much that he did not take care also for their calling of triennial parliaments. But does he stop here? No, he proceeds further in another proposition, which is this:

*Prop. 2.* If the prince shall offer violence to the subject, as a tyrant, murderer, or adulterer, and there is no help to be had from any inferior magistrate, then it is lawful for every private man to defend himself, *vi et armis*, as from a common thief or murderer.

This is wholesome divinity indeed, and it was not to be doubted, but that the former assertion would in the end produce this. His reasons for it are these two.

1. Because what the inferior magistrates may do, that every private man may do in his own behalf, in a case of necessity. The consequence, I confess, is good, and therefore grant this to be just as lawful as I have already proved the former; that is, indeed, absolutely wicked and unlawful.

2. Because otherwise God would have put it into the power of the magistrate to destroy the commonwealth. To this I answer, 1. That the magistrate is but a particular man, and therefore cannot effect such a thing by himself, but by the assistance of others, against whom some are of opinion, that the subjects may defend themselves. As amongst us, let any man rob or injure us, and although he be ever so much commanded by the king to do so, yet we have our action against him at law. But still those who hold that the king's instruments, in any act of violence upon the subject, may be resisted, qualify their assertion with these two cautions: first, that the violence offered be apparent and notorious, such as no man endued with common reason can doubt of or deny; secondly, that the person of the king be still sacred and untouched: yet, since a king, without an absolute obedience to those instruments whom he shall think fit to employ, is but a mere mockery, and an insignificant shadow; and since to make the subjects judges, when they are to obey persons so commissioned by him, and when to resist them clearly opens a door to an insolent shaking off all subjection: I cannot think it safe to build any thing upon this assertion. 2. In the second

place therefore I answer, that I see no inconvenience in granting, that that absolute authority which kings are invested withal, puts it within their power, by the abuse of it, to ruin the commonwealth. For if God puts it in the prince's power to be able to preserve, undoubtedly the same power, misemployed, will be as able to destroy society: he indeed is to be responsible to God for his tyrannical abuse of his trust; but subjects, whether their subjection makes them happy or miserable, yet still are to be subjects.

And thus I think I have answered Paræus's discourse, in which he sets himself as a bold arbitrator between the prince and the subject, so stating the privileges of one, as utterly to subvert the prerogative of the other. The usual patrons of this doctrine against princes are the Jesuits, who are properly the pope's janizaries; and those of the presbytery, whether at home or beyond the seas. But this opinion, that the supreme magistrate may be resisted by his subjects, I think none can confute so fully as the supreme magistrate himself.

2. The next case that comes to be resolved, according to the order proposed by us, is, Whether it can be lawful for one particular man to make war upon another, in those encounters which we commonly call duels?

A duel, called by the Greeks *μονομαχία*, and by the Latins *duellum*, receiving its denomination from the persons engaged in it, is properly a fight or combat between two persons, mutually undertaken, appointed, and consented to by each of them.

That the action is not a thing in itself absolutely unlawful is apparent, because otherwise it could not be lawful for two men meeting in a battle to fight one with another; nor for one man to fight for the defence of his life, with the murderer that assaults him. Since, therefore, this falls within the number of those actions, which, being indifferent in their nature, come to be stamped lawful or unlawful by their principles and circumstances, and other determining ingredients of action, we are to inquire when it is to be allowed, when not. In which inquiry we shall set down,

1st. The cases in which a duel is lawful.

2dly. The cases in which it is impious, unlawful, and utterly to be disallowed.

(1.) First of all then, when two malefactors stand convict, and condemned to die, and the magistrate appoints them to fight singly; in which fight he that overcomes shall have his life: in this case it is lawful for persons so condemned to accept of such a fight. The reason is, because on either side it is only a mutual desire of doing execution upon a malefactor convict: and it is lawful for one malefactor, upon the warrant or allowance of the magistrate, to do execution upon the other.

(2.) When two armies are drawn out to fight, and the decision

of the battle is cast upon a single combat, it is lawful for any two persons, upon the appointment of the generals, to undertake such a combat; the reason is, because it is allowable for soldiers under command to obey their generals in all things not apparently unjust: and a general has full power to draw out as much or as little of his army to fight, as he shall judge most conducive for the success; there being no ground to conclude, why he may not as well command one single soldier, as one regiment or body of men, to fight, how and when he shall judge fit. Besides the convenience of this course, that it is a compendium of war, and a redemption of the lives of thousands by the death of one, bringing all the advantages of a conquest, without the dismal miseries of a battle.

(3.) When one challenges another, and resolves immediately to kill the challenged person, unless he accepts the combat, it is then lawful for him to accept it; forasmuch as this is nothing else but a repelling of force by force, and so is resolved into pure self-preservation: which shall be considered of by itself afterwards.

But a case may be here propounded: Suppose one should accuse another for his life falsely, offering to verify his accusation by single fight, and the judge should declare that he would proceed to the sentence immediately, unless the person so accused would undertake thus to fight with his accuser in single combat.

In answer to this, some affirm that the accused person may lawfully accept the challenge, it seeming to be equally a repelling of force, and the result much the same, whether the accuser endeavours to kill the accused by his own hand, or by the unjust sentence of the judge. But, with submission to better judgments, I conceive that it is not lawful for him in this case to accept the combat, the instances propounded being not indeed the same; for in one the danger is from the sentence of the judge, which, however unjust, a man is bound to submit to; in the other, the danger is from the force of a private person, which no man is obliged to submit to, but has a natural right to repel.

And if it be replied, that such a one is necessitated to fight with his challenger in his own defence, for that otherwise he must die; I answer, that this very thing implies, that the necessity or compulsion is not absolute, but only conditional, unless he will submit to death; which of the two he is rather to choose, than to commit a sin. For the man is under a judicial process, and so has no right to defend himself by force: neither matters it to say, that the judge, by his permission or command, gives him a right; for the judge, by commanding or permitting him so to defend himself, unjustly balks his own duty, which would oblige him to decide the case of the innocent another way; and the judge's going against his duty, by an unjust command, cannot give any man a right to do according to that command. If

the man is condemned, and dies, he suffers; but if he fights with his accuser, when the law ought to deliver him, he acts, and that unjustly. And this is to be observed, that though a man, by the unjust sentence of a judge, is obliged to suffer an unjust punishment; yet he cannot, by any allowance or command of the judge, have any right or obligation to do an unjust action.

The sum of this case is, that a man, under the forementioned condition, is bound rather to die by an unjust sentence, than to take an undue course for his vindication.

2dly. I come now to show these cases in which duels are to be judged utterly unlawful.

(1.) As first, when they are undertaken for vain ostentation, and that either of affection to the dead; as it was the custom of the Romans heretofore, upon the death of some commander or great man, for some soldiers voluntarily to undertake a single fight at the funeral solemnities; and to kill one another, as it were, by way of sacrifice, in honour of the dead; by that declaring their loss so great, that they had no will to survive them. It was a custom also, for ostentation of strength and valour, at their public sights and shows, for persons to entertain the spectators with duels, and to die like fools, to please they knew not whom; till at length this wretched custom so prevailed, that some would hire themselves at the Prætorian shows, to fight thus in single combat, as men are now-a-days hired to act upon the stage; and these were called gladiators, a term that grew to as great ignominy amongst the Romans, as "thief" or "cutter" is amongst us. I suppose I need not take any pains to prove the unlawfulness, nay, the sottishness of such duellings, where men sold their lives for a crown or an angel; and by a preposterous way of labouring earned wages, not to get their living, but to procure their death. It argued also, by the way, a strange savageness in the Roman temper, that men, women, and children should come with such eagerness to, and enjoy themselves with such delight, at those barbarous spectacles, in which their chiefest diversion and recreation was to behold these duellers kill one another upon the stage. From which custom, as vile as it was, both on their parts that beheld, and on theirs that fought, most learned men are of opinion, that the use of duels, now so frequent, had its infamous original.

(2.) Another case in which men used to undertake single combats, was for the cleansing of themselves from some crime objected to them; which must needs be unlawful and highly irrational, as being a means noways suited in its nature to such a purpose; and withal, a bold presumption upon Providence, that any one, without any warrant from the revealed will of God, should presume that he must determine the success on the right side. For the ridiculous unreasonableness of it, besides the demonstrations of experience, that the guilty has frequently killed the innocent,

it is further evident, from the very nature of the thing: for is there any natural inference, from a man's strength or success, to his innocence? or is it any argument, that the man did not steal another's goods, or defile his bed, because he had better skill at his weapon than his accuser, and so slew him? I should both abuse my own labour and your patience, should I endeavour to beat down this senseless custom by any further confutation.

(3.) A third case is, when two agree upon a single combat, for the decision of the right of possessing any goods or estate, mutually claimed by both, in which it is agreed that the right shall fall to the conqueror. This also is utterly unlawful, as being a course wholly extrinsical to, and unfitted for the decision of matters of right.

For in every doubtful case, there is yet a right on one side; and where there is a right, there a right may be proved: the proving of which belongs to the law, and the courts of justice; and he that seeks for law from his rapier, which he should seek from the judge, deserves to have his person instead of his case brought to the bar. No man has a right or power to choose the way of having his right tried, by any course not prescribed or permitted by the law. He indeed, whose right the thing is, may possess and defend it against him who is pleased to doubt of the other's right; and in the defence of it may lawfully kill him in his unjust and violent invasion; but yet he may not voluntarily and by choice cast the deciding of his questioned right upon the issues of a single combat, a thing otherwise disallowed. The reason is, because though every man is master of his own right, yet he is **not** master of the way by which that right is to be tried: that being by all laws taken out of private hands, and vested in the person of a public judge. And to what purpose are courts open, and tribunals erected, if causes must be tried in the field, and inheritances conveyed by the decrees of a lawless combat, and a contingent conquest?

(4.) The fourth and grand case is, when a duel is undertaken either for revenge or some injury done, or for vindication of a man's honour, upon the account of some affront passed upon him. As for the first of these, all plea of lawfulness is taken from it, by what has been already said in condemnation of private revenge. And for the second, which is the defence of the great idol and Diana of the duellists, called honour; it is confessed that the case of the challenger, and of him that is challenged is very different. And for the former, there are few that patronize or absolve him, under what pretence soever he may absolve himself. But for the latter, many fair allegations may be made: as, that he loses his reputation upon refusal of the combat: and that, as to the real concerns of life, and the advantage of his fortunes, he is thought unfit for any public command or preferment which requires a person of courage; he is despised, scorned, and tram-

pled upon, by which the contents and comforts of life, dearer than life itself, are torn from him: but with a *non obstante* to all this, I affirm any acceptance of a duel in such a case to be unlawful. And, in answer to what has been alleged, I reply, first, that it proves only to be a difficult duty; such as the exercise of most virtues are, especially according to those straight lines of duty drawn by Christianity. For if every inconvenience attending the performance of a duty, should change it from being a duty, where is the difficulty of being religious? How can any man be obliged to suffer for conscience sake, if fear of suffering unties the obligation?

The upshot of the dispute is, God by his providence, for the trial of a man's sincerity, and his obedience to the divine law, calls him to an act of duty, beset with high dissuatives, grim circumstances, and great discouragements. So that the point lies here: will you lose your soul, or your reputation, the favour of God, or the opinion of men? quit your hopes of eternity, or the momentary breath of a popular applause? I suppose here the weight and reason of the thing is sufficient to determine his choice, and to support his spirit in all the calamities that shall attend it.

Besides, that which is here supposed, which is loss of honour, is indeed no such thing: the measure of honour, is the judgment of the knowing, and the pious, and the virtuous, who will value and applaud the passive magnanimity of such a one, that durst look a duty in the face, in spite of scorn, and conquer the scoffs of the world, of which the most reputed for valour are afraid. All that he loses is the opinion of those that rate honour by a false rule, and measure glory by the standard of their own ignorance, vanity, and rashness: and the same persons who condemn him for this, would slight him as much for not talking obscenely, nor scoffing at religion, and whatsoever is sacred, and for not drinking himself to the condition of a barrel or a sponge; or not rapping out such hideous oaths, as might even provoke divine justice to revenge the impiety of them upon a place or a nation. Those indeed who look upon the not doing of these things as a pedantry, would, no question, account all refusal of a duel poorness and pusillanimity.

It was a wise, a prudent, and indeed a valiant answer of a certain commander, who being challenged by one of his enemies to a duel, told him, that he would meet him in the head of the enemy; which to a soldier was the true opportunity of fortitude, because indeed the scene of duty.

But he that has not the courage to puff at all popular surmises, and to esteem himself superior to the riots and mistakes of hectors; but by a foolish facility appears and ventures his life at the word and challenge of a furious sot, whose life is not worth the keeping, falls ingloriously, and descends to his grave with the

burial of an ass; shame is his winding-sheet, and the solemnity of his funeral, the reprehension of the wise, the pity of the good, and the laughter of his companions; who can make sport at the loss of a soul, and the miseries of damnation.

And thus I have shown the several cases in which duels are unlawful; and I suppose I preach to an auditory that needs no other argument against them, than the demonstration of their unlawfulness: yet since other arguments there are, I think a truth cannot be too much confirmed.

And amongst these, the judgment of men generally condemning them is no contemptible one. I have already observed what an ignominious name the name of *gladiator* was amongst the heathen Romans: and in the laws of the Lombards, even while they permitted the use of those duels, they branded them with a mark of infamy. *Incerti sumus de judicio Dei, et multos audivimus per pugnam sine justâ causâ suam causam perdere. Sed propter consuetudinem gentis nostræ Longobardorum legem impiam vetare non possumus.* They called it an impious law, even while they suffered it to continue, and declared that they did so, because the corruption and vice of the nation was too strong for them, and beyond the control of remedies. The canon law, even to those that died in justs or tiltings (which were but in a manner the shadows of a duel), yet denied them the privilege of Christian burial, in the fifth book of the decretals of Gregory, ch. i. *De Torneamentis*. And if you will, you may to these add the judgment of the council of Trent, orthodox enough in this matter, where their interest gave them no cause to be otherwise, sess. 25, chap. 19. *Detestabilis duellorum usus fabricante diabolo improductus, ut cruentâ corporum morte animarum etiam perniciem lucretur, ex Christiano orbe penitus exterminetur.* Were it as needful as it is easy, many more authorities might be added, to discountenance this profane practice; but I suppose these are enough to give more credit to the refusal of a duel, than can accrue upon the acceptance of it, from the opinion and vogue of debauched persons; whose infamy will not let their censure be a reproach.

But the second and chief argument shall be taken from the wretched consequences of the thing itself, which are twofold: 1. Such as attend the conquered person. 2. Such as attend the conqueror.

As for the conquered person, he is sure of these two evils.

(1.) A disastrous death. And surely it ought to be a very great gain that is to counterbalance the loss of life; something more than the reputation of not giving the wall, not enduring a slighting word or a trivial disrespect; which might otherwise have been confuted by silence, conquered by contempt, and outlived by the next hour. But now all the labour and expense of a man's former education, all the hopes and usefulness of his remaining years, the expectations of his friends, and perhaps the



supports of a family, are lopped off at a blow, extinguished in a moment, with an overplus of misery from the sadness of the occasion.

It is a sad thing for any hopeful man, in the vigour of his years, to be carried off by a plague, or a fever, or an unfortunate accident; but still all that is uncomfortable in these is, that the man is dead; but there is no criminal circumstance, from the manner of his death, to embitter his remembrance: he did not die by a sin, or by any thing that might stain his surviving name or endanger his future condition. It was the action of Providence, which piety will, and mortality must submit to. But he that dies in a duel, so falls to the earth, that it is to be feared he falls much lower; and that the iron enters deeper into his soul than into his body, and kills much further than it reaches. And this introduces the other fatal consequence, which attends the person thus vanquished; and that is,

(2.) Death eternal. When two persons come into the field upon such an expedition, they defy one another, they defy the laws both of God and man, and they defy hell: their business is, which shall send the other to that place of misery first. For certainly whosoever quits the body with the marks of murder and revenge fresh upon his soul, and passes from his conquering adversary to his dreadful Judge, shall in that world be condemned for a murderer, though it was his ill hap to be murdered in this.

Nay, there will lie a double charge of murder upon him: namely, for being both the unjust occasion of his own death, and the designer of his adversary's: for it is the design that makes the murderer, and not the event and issue of the action, which is wholly contingent and extrinsical to the will. For shall a man be therefore accounted no murderer, because he had less courage, less skill, or less luck than his opposite? because his purpose was stronger than his arm? or because his foot slipped, or his misguided rapier hit upon a rib, and kept the fatal point from the regions of life, and so gave the adversary opportunity to be more sure and mischievous in his thrust? All which plea or excuse amounts to no more than this, that he would have slain his adversary with all his heart, but was prevented, and could not.

I neither will nor dare pronounce any thing in limitation of the extent of God's mercy; but this I shall say, that according to the standing rule and tenor of God's revealed will, he that dies in a duel undertaken upon an unjust cause, affords no ground for any one to judge that he is saved: for he dies in his sin, directing his sword to his brother's heart; so that there is nothing but his last breath passing between his murderous intention and the final giving up of his accounts to God; before whom he has no other cause to allege for his dying in this manner, but that he was proud, passionate, or revengeful; sad qualifications to recommend a man to the tribunal of such a judge.

We have seen here the miserable consequences that befall the conquered dueller. Let us now, in the next place, take a survey of those that befall the conqueror; and these also are three.

(1.) In case he is apprehended: the law has provided that for him which he did for his adversary, but in a more ignominious manner. The rope and the gibbet is to be his portion; die he must; and what honour a man wins or saves, by that which gives him an opportunity of being hanged, is hard to be understood; but he that mistakes the cart for a triumphal chariot, or the gallow-tree for a triumphal arch, may apply himself to the obtaining such victories as these.

(2.) But secondly, suppose that he escapes by flight; yet then he quits his country, and lives a banished man, and like Cain, having murdered his brother, he presently betakes himself to wander about the world, leaving behind him the confiscation of his goods, a family lamenting, and perhaps starving; and some of them peradventure dying for grief, and so feeling the murderous influence of his action, as really, though not in the same manner, as his slain adversary. Surely these will be sad accidents to a man in cold blood, when the fury of his passion, which abused his reason, and represented revenge so pleasant, shall be over, and transmit the thing naked to his recovered judgment, to be considered according to its real aspect and all its sharp events. By this time, undoubtedly, he will see how much better it had been for him to have kept himself quiet and innocent in the peaceable enjoyment of his friends, his estate, and country; than to wander as an indigent murderer in a strange land, from whence the sense of his guilt, the severity of the laws, and the exasperation of the murdered person's friends, ready to prosecute those laws against him, continually terrify him from all thoughts of a return.

(3.) But, in the third and last place, we will suppose the man to have better fortune: that he has fought and killed his adversary, and so satisfied his revenge: and moreover, that through the intercession of great friends, willing to share his guilt, and derive some of the blood upon their own heads, he has not by flight escaped, but by a full acquitment outbraved justice, and triumphed over the law, and so stands secure as to all temporal retribution. But still, after all this, may we not ask concerning such a one, is all well within? How fares it with him in the court of conscience? Is he able to keep off the grim arrests of that? Can he drown the cry of blood, and bribe his own thoughts to let him alone? Can he fray off the vulture from his breast, that night and day is gnawing his heart, and wounding it with ghastly and amazing reflections?

Whether it is, that God has done it for the defence of men's lives, or whether it is the unnaturalness of the sin, or whatsoever else may be the cause, certain it is, that there is nothing which

dogs the conscience so incessantly, fastens upon it so closely, and tears it so furiously, as the dismal sense of blood-guiltiness. The man perhaps endeavours to be merry; he goes about his business, he enjoys his cups and his jolly company; and possibly, if he fought for revenge, he is applauded and admired by some; if he fought for a mistress, he is smiled upon for a day. But when in the midst of all his gaieties, his conscience shall come and sound him in the ear: Sir, you are to remember that you have murdered a man, and what is more, you have murdered a soul; you have sacrificed an immortal nature, the image of God, and the price of Christ's blood, to a pique, a punctilio, to the loves of a pitiful creature, lighter than vanity, and emptier than the air: and these are the worthy causes for which your brother now lies in the regions of darkness and misery, without relief, without recovery; an eternal sacrifice to a short passion, a rash anger, and a sudden revenge.

Now when these reasonings shall be joined with the considerations of the divine justice, and the retributions that heaven reserves for blood; these sad reckonings, that are in store for the successful acquitted murderer: believe it, where these thoughts shall lay hold of the conscience, they will leave their marks behind them. But if the man feels none of these stings or remorse, his condition is infinitely worse: he is sealed up under a spirit of searedness, and reprobation, and an invincible curse. And it is a sign that God intends him not the grace of repentance, perhaps for denying his brother the opportunities of it, by a sudden death; and sending him out of the world in such a condition, that it were ten thousand times better for himself never to have come into the world, than that he should leave it under the like.

I have nothing more to say concerning such a person, but that his sin has put him in such an estate, that, living or dying, he is unavoidably miserable.

## SERMON XIX

## PART III.

## CHRISTIANS EXHORTED TO LIVE PEACEABLY.

## ROMANS XII. 18.

*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

You may remember that the second particular laid down for the prosecution of these words, was to assign the measures and proportions by which the duty of living peaceably was to be determined: which I showed were contained within the bounds of *lawful*. In my inquiries into which, I undertook the resolution of several cases. As, concerning the lawfulness of war: of keeping or breaking the peace with the magistrate; as also of duels. All which I have already finished, so that there remain only two more to be discussed. One of which is,

3. Whether it be lawful to repel force by force, so as to kill another in one's own defence?

The matter of which question is very different from that about duels. For a **duel** is a fight freely and voluntarily undertaken by the offer of one party, and the acceptance of the other. But this is a sudden, a violent, and unforeseen assault, in respect of him that is assaulted; who thereupon enters not into combat upon any precedent choice or deliberate appointment; but upon the sudden alarms of force and necessity, and the compulsions of an extreme danger. In which condition we are to suppose the man cut off from all possibility of flying, shut up from all succour by a rescue, or remedy by the law; but driven into those straits, both of place, time, and all other circumstances, that all evasion is rendered desperate and impossible, but through the blood of his adversary. In this case I affirm it to be lawful for a man to save himself by destroying his enemy, and that upon these two reasons:

The first taken from that which we have already insisted upon; the great natural right of self-preservation: which right is as full in particular persons as in public bodies. It is the very first-born of all the rudiments of nature; and the very ground and reason of its actions: not instilled by precept, but suggested by instinct. A man is no more instructed to this, than he is to be hungry or thirsty, when nature wants its due refection. And

that as to this particular the rights of nature are not abridged by Christian religion, will appear from the

Second argument, taken from that place where Christ commands his disciples to provide themselves swords: but to have allowed them the instruments of defence, and at the same time to have forbid the use of them as unlawful, had been highly irrational. I suppose Christ did not command those poor fishermen to wear swords for ornament only, as men do now-a-days; but that he might countenance them in the management of their own preservation, amidst those many unjust violences and assaults, that were likely enough to attend men odious to the world for the promulgation of severe truths.

Add to this the suffrage of the civil law, where the code in the Cornelian law *De Sicariis* utters itself thus: *Is qui aggressorem vel quemcunque alium in dubio vitæ discrimine constitutus occiderit, nullam ob id factum calumniam metuere debet.* And further, in the Aquilian law, to the same purpose: *Vim vi repellere omnes leges omniaque jura permittunt.*

So that we have seen the verdict of nature, of Christ, and of the civil law, in the present case; and he whom these absolve is a just and an innocent person, whatsoever other law may condemn him. Yet since nature, in the present corruption of mankind, is weak and dark, and so apt to misjudge of the necessity of self-defence; oftentimes making that to be so, which indeed is nothing else but an unnecessary fear or a sinful revenge; it being a very easy thing to clothe an unlawful action or design with a lawful name: therefore it concerns us so to assert the privilege, as to take off the danger; and this will be done by stating it under its due limitations. In order to which, I shall endeavour to clear these three inquiries.

1st. What are those things, for the necessary defence of which it may be lawful to kill the unjust invader?

2dly. What are the conditions required to render that defence lawful?

3dly. Who are the persons against whom we may justly manage such a defence?

And first for the things that may be thus defended.

(1.) The first is life; the eminent and certain danger of which does lawfully unsheath every man's sword in the defence of it. For where it is lawful to live, it is lawful to do ~~all~~ those things without which life cannot be preserved. Life is a purchase to be rated at the loss of all things else. He that loses it, loses all the world with it, and every thing dies, as to the fruition of the dying man. There is no reparation to be made for it, either in kind or any thing else, as in some degree it may be done in all other losses. For he that loses his friend or his honour, may be repaid with an estate, though not to an equality of compensation. But a lost life can be repaid with no enjoyment, since it is the

foundation of all other enjoyments; and no man enjoys any thing but the living. For can we think that a pompous burial or a fine tomb will make the dead any amends, or to have a few mournful words spoken of him for fashion-sake, as that he was an excellent person, and that it was a loss to the public that he should be snatched away by such a disaster; which words, being dead, he cannot hear; and if alive, perhaps would not much regard. But all this while the man continues the portion of worms and rottenness, and the great injury of death maintains its full effect upon him. All after-honours and commemorations being but like the serving up of a banquet to a grave, or like the ceremony of courtship and compliment to the cold flints and the insensible rocks.

(2.) When a man is in imminent danger of the mutilation of a leg or an arm, or the like, it is lawful to prevent the loss of either by the death of the assailant. For who knows but the loss of a part may bring the destruction of the whole. Where the danger is indefinite, there the utmost and the greatest is to be feared, and proportionably to be provided against. The man perhaps in the issue of the conflict may lose but a finger, but thereupon his hand may gangrene, and then his arm, and from thence the mischief reach his heart; or he may receive but a blow only, which blow may sow the seeds of death in his body, in an imposthume, which shall grow and prevail, and at length break, and bear him to his grave. In which case there is no doubt but the man is murdered, though it be ten years before he dies, as truly as if he had breathed his last the very next minute. For he murders a man, who gives him a hurt, upon which death certainly and irrecoverably follows, whatsoever the time of it chance to be. The cause may have its effect, be the distance of time or place what it will, so long as it reaches it by the connexion of a certain influence. And he that pulls one end of the chain, moves the remotest link of it as surely as if he did it by an immediate touch.

But suppose that death should not follow upon the loss of a limb, and moreover (which is yet impossible), that the assaulted person knew so much, yet nature no less dictates the preservation of every part; it being as natural to a man to be entire and perfect, as to be, and to have all his limbs, as any one of them. Besides that it is ~~often~~ worse than death itself to live with the deformities and pains of a shattered, mangled body: as a burden to one's self, and a contempt to others. From which miseries there are few, but, were it in their power, would ransom themselves with the price of the world: and of their blood too, did not the awe of God and the terrors of another death keep them from breaking the uncomfortable prison of such a body, to pass to an eternal execution.

(3.) When a person's chastity is invaded by force, it is granted

on all hands to be lawful to kill the person that invades it. For this is as irreparable as life itself; it is lost but once, and if it should come in competition with life, it would be judged more valuable. Upon which ground Tamar, had she had strength and courage enough, might have saved her brother Absalom the labour of killing Amnon, and prevented an unjust revenge by a just defence.

To lose one's life is indeed a misery, but it is no dishonour; but the ravished person is dishonoured, her glory stained, and the lustre of that reputation by which she lives and stands accepted in the world, is blasted for ever. I know no parent, who deserves to be a parent, who had not rather see a child dead, than deflowered. Virginus rescued his daughter from the lust and violence of Appius Clodius the decemvir, by stabbing her dead with his own hand. I am not concerned to warrant his action; but surely it argues the value that the very heathen put upon their chastity, when the very design against it was thought fit to be prevented by the death of the innocent, and to be revenged upon the nocent, even to the subversion of a government.

(4.) In the fourth place, as for the preservation of estate or goods, the case admits of some more doubt. And there are opinions both for the affirmative and the negative.

Those who hold the negative argue,

First, From the law of Moses, which in *Exod. xxii. 2, 3*, distinguishes the case of a thief robbing by day and by night, allowing it for lawful to kill him if he makes an invasion in the night: whereas if he is killed in the day, the same law avouches the man that killed him guilty of murder. Of which difference these two reasons are alleged: 1. Because it cannot be distinguished in the night, whether he comes barely to steal or to murder also; and therefore it is lawful to kill him, not considered merely as a thief, but upon just suspicion that he might come as a murderer. 2. Because goods taken away in the night leave the person robbed destitute of all means by which to discover the robber, and consequently of all legal means by which to recover what he had lost.

*Ans.* This is true, and upon the strength of this very ground I answer this argument brought from the Mosaic law, by affirming, that howsoever the letter runs, yet the design of that law was not to make every killing of a thief in the daytime murder, but that usually and ordinarily it was to be accounted so. For since the law makes it lawful to kill a thief in the night, because at that time all people being usually disposed to their rest, it supposes that there are no witnesses present, by whose means the injured man might have right against him at law: but unlawful to kill him in the day, because then it supposes that there may be witnesses, as for the most part there are. Yet since sometimes it so falls out, that there neither are nor can be any;

it will follow by analogy of reason, that a man under such circumstances is permitted to deal with a thief as in the night; since the very cause for which he was permitted to do it then, does equally take place now.

In the second place, some argue against the lawfulness of killing a robber for the preservation of our goods, from the tenor of the gospel, and the design of Christian religion; which bids the professors of it despise and trample upon these temporal things, and therefore certainly permits them not to prevent the loss of them with the blood of any one who should presume to take them. To this I answer, that the gospel commands us only to despise these things comparatively, in reference to spiritual and eternal felicities. Otherwise, if the words be understood absolutely, it could not be lawful for us so much as to defend our lives; since some texts in the letter of them command us no less to despise these, than those other enjoyments.

I conclude therefore for the affirmative, that it is lawful for a man to defend his estate and goods against an unjust force, even with the death of him who offers that force, if they cannot be retained and possessed otherwise. The reason is, because they are the means and support of life, and therefore are to be reckoned in the same account with life itself. If one should say, that it were lawful for a man to knock him on the head, that should offer to batter down his house to the ground before his face; but that he was by no means to touch him, in case he only took away the chief pillar, upon which the house leaned; notwithstanding that upon the removal of that pillar it must fall as unavoidably as if it were pulled down: surely such a distinction were grossly absurd and ridiculous.

The case is the same here. Neither does that reply take off the argument, that a man may live though his estate be lost, as by labour, charity, or the getting of another. For this is accidental, and it may fall out otherwise. And every man is to look upon what he possesses as his only subsistence; since he is not certain, upon the loss of it, to have any other: nay, he is certain that at the present he has none; nor is like to have any for the future, unless some accident or opportunity of a livelihood offers itself, which he is not to suppose or build upon, it being wholly uncertain and contingent; especially, so as to take him off from his dependence upon that which is certain and present.

Should a man put his whole estate into a jewel, either for concealment of his estate, as being otherwise in danger, or for some other advantage or convenience; and should be set upon for it by a thief upon the road, so that all hope of rescue being out of the way, there remained no other means to preserve it but by killing the robber upon the place: I must confess, I can see no solid reason why he might not do justice upon him, and right to himself, by sending him out of the world with his blood upon



his own head. If any excellent and pious persons have chosen to do otherwise, the thief was beholden to them; and they have only quitted their own right, which lays no injunction at all upon others to quit theirs.

For if a man sets upon me in the highway to kill me, all grant that I may in my own defence kill him; but if he would only take my money, that, it seems, I must relinquish by any means rather than take his life. But let the reason of the difference be assigned. If I ask, what makes it lawful for me to kill him in the former case? it will be answered surely, to preserve my life. But I reply, Is not my life as much destroyed if I am starved, as if I am stabbed? And when my money is once gone, I am sure I may be starved, and none can assure me that I shall not. For am I certain that I shall find a bag of money or a table spread in the road, or that people will be so charitable, as upon free cost to keep me from hunger and cold? which annoyances, unless they will do so, must as surely despatch me, as either a rapier thrust into my bowels, or a bullet sent to my heart.

Neither is that further exception of any moment, that there is no proportion in point of value between the loss of money and the loss of a life. For in the present case my money, compared to my enemy's life, is not to be considered barely as such a sum of money, but as it is the necessary support of my life: so that really, and in effect, the comparison is between his life and mine; in which I conclude myself warranted, by the rights and laws of nature, to prefer my own before his. Nay, if it were but a sixpence that he would rifle me of, and I had no other visible subsistence in the world but that poor sum, I might lawfully defend that, as I would myself, that is, with the death of my enemy; and count it as equal a stake against his life, as if it were ten thousand millions.

And thus I have shown those four things which it is lawful for a man thus to defend; namely, life, limbs, chastity, and estate: where, before I pass any further, I shall add this, that whatsoever it is lawful for a man to do in these cases for himself, the same also is lawful for him to do in the same danger and extremity of his neighbour. The reason is, because the measure and standard of his love to his neighbour, is to be the love that he bears to himself. Which yet, by the way, is to be understood under equal cases and circumstances: for though we are commanded to "love our neighbour as ourselves," yet it follows not, but when the danger must inevitably fall upon one of us, we may preserve ourselves before our neighbour; because, in the same condition, we are bound to desire no more for ourselves, but that our neighbour should save us in the next place to himself; and therefore, by virtue of this precept, he can desire no more of us. In a word, we are to love our neighbour as ourselves, putting him into the same condition and circumstances in

reference to us, as we are in reference to him : and therefore, as I myself could not in reason desire, but that my neighbour, in a danger equal to us both, should first defend himself; so my neighbour cannot deny, but that I should do as much for myself under this condition, as I allow him to do for himself under the same. But this by way of digression.

Certain it is, that the defence of our neighbour in his extremity engages us to all those extraordinary courses that we took for own preservation. Upon this account it was, that Abraham armed his household, and slew kings for the rescue of his kinsman Lot, taken captive by them, Gen. xiv. 14, 15. And there is no man, whose concerns and obligations terminate within himself; but he is a relative person, and must own a debt to friendship, to consanguinity, and society. For as in the natural body the whole is maintained by that sympathy and mutual feeling, that the members have of the condition of each other; by which, when any of them is in distress, it calls for and receives help and relief from all the rest: so it is, according to its proportion, in the political body, which is only an aggregate, artificial man. Every particular person lies under an obligation to come in to the succour of his endangered brother, as the hand would presently lift itself up in the defence of the leg or the face, to repel and beat off whatsoever would annoy them. And the contrary would be barbarous and absurd, a perverting of the designs of nature, which, by thus leaving the interest of every part single in itself, and divided from and independent upon the concernment of its fellows, would quickly draw a ruin and dissolution upon the whole fabric. That man who could stand and see another stripped or hacked in pieces by a thief or a rogue, and not at all concern himself in his rescue, is a traitor to the laws of humanity and religion; he commits murder with his eyes, and sheds blood by not striking a blow; and shall one day account to God for the guilt of that action, that was as criminally permitted by him as done by the other.

2dly. I come now to the second thing, which is, to show the conditions required to legalize such a defence of ourselves and fortunes. And they are these :

(1.) That the violence offered be so apparent, and withal so great and pressing, that there can be no other means of escaping it, but by **killing** the adversary: otherwise, if a man makes it great by his own presumptions and fears, and so makes it necessary to himself to repel that injury with a mortal wound from his rapier, which he might have done with a blow of a switch or a thrust of his arm, he is a murderer; nor will it excuse him to plead a danger which was only created by his own apprehensions. Thus in the late rebellion, when some persons, by the guilt of great villanies, had exasperated majesty, and so having deserved, were pleased also to fear the just consequences of their

actions; they were so bold as to strike the first blow, and then so impudent as to say that they did it in their own defence. But that saying of Vibius Crispus, commended by Quintilian, may be here fitly applied, *Quis tibi sic timere permisit?* Fear greatens and redoubles every evil, it stretches the shadow, and enlarges the suspicion: but blood must not be shed upon surmise.

That which must warrant a man in this before God and his conscience, must be a danger as manifest as the light; a life even perishing, and in the very jaws of death: not a hazard that may be disputed, but an extremity that calls and cries, and admits of no answer but an immediate deliverance. And if in this case a life be taken away, he only is a murderer that deserved, not he that inflicted the blow.

(2.) It is required, that all possibility of recourse to the magistrate for a legal protection be taken away. In which case the law leaves every man to his own natural defence. For men are not made for laws, but laws for the good and preservation of men: and therefore though they enjoin the injured person to fly to them for succour; yet when he is surrounded with such circumstances as render such access to them impossible; and in the mean time that life, for the preservation of which those laws were designed, is under an unavoidable danger, without flying to other remedies; should those laws tie a man's hand in such a case, they were only snares and traps, and means to deliver a man naked and undefended to be devoured by his enemy.

But, as I observed before, war is a remedy upon the failure of law. And when the supreme and fatal law of necessity comes to be in force, all inferior obligations disband and vanish: and the law that tells a man that no particular person's injury can take from him his right to live, ought to take place, and both to direct him what he is to do in this affair, and to absolve him when he has done.

(3.) In the third place, it is required that a man in the act of defending himself designs merely his own defence, without any hatred or bitter purpose of revenge towards the person who thus invades him. A lawful action may be depraved and changed by the intervention of an ill intention. Jehu executed the command of God in extirpating the house of Ahab, and consequently that action of his was lawful; but yet we find that the same action was reckoned to him for sin, because a particular malice and design against Ahab's house mingled with it, and so altered the whole complexion of the performance.

To discern whether a man in these defensive conflicts be acted by a purpose of self-defence, pure and unmixed from any spice of revenge, I confess is very difficult, in case the assault shall be continued till it determines in the death of one party. But if the defendant chance to prevail over the assailant to that degree,

as to be able to secure himself from him without taking of his life, and yet shall not be brought to give over, or acquiesce, till he has despatched him: though his first stroke in this engagement was but defence, and so lawful; yet the sharpness of revenge growing upon his spirit in the midst of the action, it is to be feared that the last stroke was murder, and so will pass in the accounts of heaven.

And thus much for the second thing, namely, to show the conditions required to render the killing of another in our own defence lawful.

3dly. The third, which I shall despatch in a word or two, is to inquire who are the persons against whom we may lawfully thus defend ourselves. And for this, I cannot conceive that any doubt can be raised, but concerning these two, a magistrate and a parent. As for the magistrate, the grounds that I have already laid of non-resistance, by virtue of every subject's quitting his natural right of defending himself against the magistrate, and resigning up all power of resistance into his governor's hands, sufficiently proves, that this doctrine gives no countenance to the subject in repelling any invasion made upon him by his prince. But as for a parent; the son has made no such resignation of his right up to him. And therefore there are not wanting some casuists amongst the Jesuits, who have ventured to own the lawfulness of a man's defending himself against parents as well as kings, and all superiors whatsoever; even with the death of those who shall invade him. But yet I affirm, that for a son in any case whatsoever to take away his father's life, from whence, under God, he received his own, seems to imply such a turpitude in the thing itself, and to offer such a grievance to nature, that he is to choose to die rather than, upon any inducement of extremity, to stain his hands in the blood of his father. This I will grant, that in case a father shall unjustly assault the life of his son, his son may proceed to defend himself so far as to disarm him, shut him up, and bind him; but to kill him is unnatural and intolerable. And if a son cannot otherwise secure his life from his father's violence, it is more eligible to die a thousand deaths, than to make such a monstrous and inhuman trespass upon so sacred a name and relation.

And thus I have endeavoured both to clear and to assert the doctrine of self-defence in its due latitude. In all which discourse I am not sensible that I have uttered any thing but the voice of nature, and the rightly explained sense of religion.

As for those who assert the contrary, and by taking from mankind all right of self-preservation, would have them still live in the world as naked as they came into it: I shall not wish them any hurt, but if I would, I could scarce wish them a greater, than that they might feel the full effect and influence of their own opinion.

4thly. The fourth and last case to be resolved is, Since to prosecute another in courts of judicature is in its kind a certain breach of the mutual bond of peace, whether it be allowable for Christians thus to prosecute and to go to law one with another?

It may, perhaps, at first sight seem a strange and an insolent design, to bring a thing vouched by custom, owned by practice, and established by authority, under dispute: yet since it is no less our duty to be able to give a reason of what we do, than of what we believe; and since there are not wanting scriptures, to whose rules we profess to submit our practice, yet in appearance contrary to this; and since there are also some in the world, who think they have sufficient ground from those scriptures to entertain a contrary opinion: I conceive I may, without blame, enter into a disquisition of a thing already controverted; that so, by an impartial survey of the reasons of both sides, we may settle our future practice upon such sure grounds, that if it appears we have been in the wrong, we may be convinced, and brought off from, but if in the right, we may be confirmed in the thing hitherto allowed by us.

As for those who have been so bold as to arraign the courts of law themselves, they are the anabaptists; who succeed into all the principles and opinions of the old anabaptists, those sons of confusion, that once so infested Germany: concerning the nature of whose opinions I cannot but judge this, that those who own a design to remove and cast down all human laws and judgments, ought to be persons either absolutely, and even to a necessity innocent, or very highly malefactors; the former of which might oppose them as needless; the latter, as dreadful and destructive. As for their innocence; the stories of their barbarous rebellions, murders, and the desolations made by them, have settled men's judgments concerning that. And, therefore, if their opinions grow from their guilt, in conjunction with their ignorance, as it cannot appear from what root else they should grow, I shall endeavour to remove the latter, leaving the laws themselves to deal with the former.

In the management of this question, I shall, 1. Examine the arguments brought against the allowableness of Christians going to law. 2. Consider what may be argued and alleged for it. 3. Propose the conditions required to warrant men in such a practice.

First of all then, their arguments seem principally to bear upon two places of scripture.

(1.) The first is, that formerly hinted by me, and reserved to be discussed in its proper place here, which is in Matt. v. 40, where Christ determines that general precept of not resisting evil, to an utter abolition of all law-suits; commanding every disciple of his, that in case any man will "sue him at law, and take away his coat, he should let him have his cloak also." And

certainly there is scarce any thing more indispensably necessary to a man's subsistence, than his raiment. But now if a man shall be obliged even to ~~relinquish~~ this, and resign it up to the hand of violence, rather than to recover it by a legal trial, it must needs follow, that the rigour of this command cuts off all pretences of going to law whatsoever.

In answer to this, I cannot but observe, that it is the custom of this sort of men still to argue from the letter of scripture, in abstraction from the sense; and without any pondering either of the occasion, circumstances, or coherence of the text, immediately to fly and fasten upon the bare outside of the expression. Two things, therefore, may be answered to this text.

1st. That it is not certain, that what we render by "suing at law" signifies any such thing; the Greek is *τῷ θέλοντί σοι κριθῆναι*; but *κρίνομαι* signifies to strive, war, and contend with another by force; so that it is all one with *μάχεσθαι, καὶ ἐρίζεσθαι σοι*. But to sue another at law is *κρίνειν*; and that with an accusative case, *τῷ θέλοντί σε κρίνειν*; and to be sued, in the passive, *κρίνομαι*: according to which, *τῷ θέλοντί σοι κριθῆναι*, taking *σοι* for *ὑπὸ σοῦ*, must signify, "to him that is willing to be sued by thee at law:" the meaning being this; he that has taken thy coat from thee, and is willing to be brought by thee into a trial for it, to him give thy cloak also. Which sense besides that it is highly incongruous, *τὸν χιτῶνά σου λαβεῖν* should have gone before *σοι κριθῆναι*, and so the words have run thus: "To him that is desirous to take thy coat, and then to go to law with thee for it:" and not preposterously, "To him that is desirous to go to law with thee, and to take thy coat, to him give thy cloak also;" which is to make the going to law antecedent to the wrong or injury about which men go to law.

It is more probable therefore, that the sense of the text is this; "If any one would unjustly contend with thee, and forcibly take away thy cloak, let him have thy coat also." According to which sense, the words speak nothing at all of the suits or trials at law. And this interpretation, grounded upon the propriety of the word, and so fully agreeing both with what goes before, and with what follows after, if any one will positively insist upon it, I do verily believe, cannot by any solid reason be disproved.

2dly. But because I think such respect is to be had to the translation, that it is not, but upon very urgent necessity, to be receded from; therefore, in the second place, I add, that these words are to be interpreted with analogy to the design carried on by Christ throughout this whole chapter, which is, to show the perverse and sinful practice of the Jews, in which they were abetted by the pharisees; and withal to declare, of how much contrary a temper his disciples and followers ought to be.

Now the custom of the Jews was, upon the receiving any injury, to pursue that law of retaliation so fiercely and bitterly, that sometimes (as I have observed before) one private man

would execute it upon another; and when they could not safely or conveniently do it themselves, but were forced to implore the help of the magistrate, and to drag the injurious person before him; yet they did it with so much acrimony and gall, and such designs of personal revenge, that it sufficiently appeared to any impartial or judicious eye, that in all their prosecutions of offenders, they did not so much consult either the satisfaction of justice, or their own necessary reparation, as indeed seldom needing any at all, as they did the fruitless gratification of a remorseless, vindictive humour.

Hereupon Christ reads a contrary lecture of patience, meekness, and quietness, to his disciples, telling them, that in case they should have any thing injuriously purloined from them, they should rather sit down under the loss of that and a much greater thing too, than with so much virulence and exasperation of mind, as was common amongst the Jews, and unreprehended, not to say countenanced by the pharisees, pursue the recovery of their former right. These words therefore do not absolutely prohibit them, being injured, to endeavour a just reparation; but conditionally rather to quit the benefit of justice, than to follow it in a sinful manner. They are a sublime precept of patience, upon a wrong offered to our goods, parallel to those words, "If any one smite thee on the right cheek, turn the other also;" which enjoins the same measure of patience upon a wrong offered to our persons. And consequently, as heretofore, in the exposition of those, I showed from Christ's own practice, the best comment upon his precepts, that they were not to be understood according to the rigid import of the letter, as if every man were bound to covet injuries and to court affronts; so I affirm also, that this command is not to be exacted according to the bare surface of the words, but to be enlarged to the allowance and latitude of a figure, as being indeed just such another hyperbole: which is a trope, that to set forth the greatness of a thing more emphatically, words it in expressions greater than really it is. And thus much in answer to what they argue from this place of scripture.

(2.) The next great place, which some think to speak as fully to their purpose as this, is that in 1 Cor. vi. 7, "Now there is utterly a fault amongst you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do you not rather take wrong? Why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" Which words certainly amount to a pregnant and full prohibition of all going to law, since they declare it to be our duty rather to suffer, nay, even to embrace any wrong, than by such means to recover our right.

But to this I answer,

1st. That what we render "a fault," is in the Greek not *ἀμαρτία*, but only *ἡττημα*, which signifies properly a weakness or

defect; and such do not always, or of necessity, carry sin along with them. According to which sense, the apostle does not condemn their going to law, as a thing in itself sinful or unjust; but as low and weak, and not answerable to that greatness and generosity of spirit, which became persons owning so excellent a profession.

2dly. But in the second place, admitting that the apostle's design here is to discountenance this practice, not only as weak and illaudable, but also as sinful and disallowable; yet I affirm, that he accounted it not sinful from the very nature of the action, but only the irregularity of the circumstance; that they went to law upon every slight occasion, before unbelievers, in ver. 1. And though to go to law be very allowable, yet for Christians to prosecute one another before the tribunals of infidels, for those injuries which they might fairly compromise by the arbitration and decision of persons of their own body, was a thing that reflected a high disgrace, and left a great scandal upon Christian religion; and consequently as great a guilt upon those who brought the scandal.

In short, the apostle here either reprehends them only for going to law before unbelievers, or barely for going to law, as being a thing utterly unjust in itself. If he designs only the former, as it is clear from the whole chain of the context from the first verse to the ninth, that he does; then it concludes nothing against the latter, but that before a believing judge, and a Christian court, with a due observance of other circumstances, Christians may right themselves at law. But if it be said, that the apostle directs the edge of this reproof against the very action itself; then let it be made out, how the apostle can accord himself with himself, who suffers Christians to go to law before the saints, in ver. 1: "Dare any one of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?" Which shows, that what he prohibits under one, in the very same breath he permits under the other. Nay, he proceeds to give reasons why they should manage the judgment of these things themselves, in ver. 2, 3, "If the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" And "Know ye not that ye shall judge angels? how much more things pertaining to this life?" And again, in ver. 5, "I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man amongst you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?" And now, is it not as clear from all these places, as if they were writ with a sunbeam, that the apostle's intention is not levelled against their going to law, but against the persons before whom they did it? That they chose to discover and rip up the sores of the church, before such infidels as would deride them, rather than before Christians, who would endeavour to conceal and cure them.



The only thing that can be replied here, is, that in those primitive times of Christianity, the Christians had no tribunals or power of judging, as being under the jurisdiction of heathen potentates: and therefore what they did in order to the deciding of controversies and suits between man and man, they did not do as judges armed with the civil power, but as arbitrators chosen and consented to amongst themselves, for the ending and composing of differences. And therefore, though it might be lawful to bring one's cause before such judges, yet it cannot now be lawful to sue a brother in any of our courts, properly so called, as holding a power of jurisdiction from the magistrate.

But to this I answer; that this is so far from overthrowing or weakening the thing which it is brought to disprove, that it is a notable argument to confirm it: for if the apostles allowed it as lawful for them to bring their causes before Christians, that they might exercise a judicial act in deciding them, who yet were not endued with any legal, judicial authority from the magistrate; certainly it were highly strange and irrational, to prohibit men to seek for the same judicial acts, from such as were both Christians, and also empowered with such a judicial authority from the civil governor. In a word, it would amount to this; that Christians might try their causes before Christians, not having any legal jurisdiction for that purpose, but only the consent of the contending parties. But when the same persons come to have the stamp of public authority, enabling them so to do by virtue of their office; why then, all trials before them must presently cease to be lawful, and become only a betraying of the rights and privileges of believers. I shall say no more of this wild and inconsequent deduction, but that it is an argument fit to be found only in the mouth of those, whose custom it is to dispute against reason, and to fight against government.

(3.) The third argument against the allowableness of Christians going to law, is that strict command that lies upon them to forgive injuries, and consequently not to prosecute them in courts of judicature, forasmuch as these two seem utterly inconsistent.

But to this also I reply, that in most injuries we are to consider and distinguish two things: first, the right that is lost; secondly, the offence done to whom it is lost. And though it may be my duty to forgive the offence done me by him that violently takes away my right; yet it follows not that I must therefore quit my right; but may, with full allowance of equity and piety, endeavour the regaining of that, while I fully remit the other. And that this is not a mere verbal distinction without a difference, is evident from hence: that supposing that somebody robs me of my goods, and I recover them all to the value of the utmost farthing; yet still after this recovery it is certain that the man has done me an injury, and reason and religion will oblige him to ask me forgiveness; which it could not

do, supposing that the wrong did not continue, even after I was repossessed of what I had lost. It is clear therefore, that the prosecution of one's right at law does yet leave a fair scope for the exercise of forgiveness; and consequently that they may not exclude or jostle out one another.

I cannot think of any thing else in scripture that seems to cast any probability of favour upon this opinion: and therefore looking upon the proof of it as desperate upon this account, I proceed to the second thing; which is, to show what may be argued for the allowableness of Christians prosecuting their rights in courts of judicature.

But beforehand I shall premise this: That the ground upon which all such prosecutions proceed is twofold: 1. Restitution; and, 2. Punishment. That is, a man is sued either to restore what he has taken from another; or brought into court for some offence or mischief done by him, for which, since no restitution can be made, he is to sustain some penalty for the satisfaction of the law. In which two cases, though it is obvious to see that a man may prosecute another for the restitution of something taken from him, without any thoughts of bitterness or revenge; yet since the punishment of another cannot at all redound to my advantage or reparation, it may be inquired, what can warrant a man in his prosecution of another, only to bring him to this, without being chargeable with the designs of revenge. To this I answer, that this obligation and subjection to the community, of which he is a member, engages him to this. For every man is bound to endeavour the good and preservation of the public, and consequently to prosecute a thief or a murderer, though personally they have not injured him, forasmuch as such persons have made a breach upon society and common justice; which requires a reparation: yea, and that so strictly, that if a man is robbed, though being master of his own right, he might choose whether upon that score he would prosecute him for such robbery; yet since by the same there is an injury done to the public, which he cannot pardon, the law binds him to prosecute the robber, and makes him liable to be prosecuted himself, in case he should not. I conclude therefore, that all these prosecutions of a man in the courts of law are just and allowable. And so I pass to the arguments for the proof of the assertion; which are these:

(1.) To endeavour the execution of justice in the proper acts of it between man and man, is allowable before God, and not repugnant to religion: but without going to law, there can be no such endeavour for the execution of justice, and consequently it is to be admitted. That the former is not repugnant to religion is clear; for then justice and religion would be contrary, which would be to cast a high aspersion upon both.

Justice is the noblest dictate issuing from the principles of im-

proved nature; and nature, which is the law of God written in our hearts, cannot contradict his law as it is written in his word. God cannot write the same thing a duty in ~~one~~ law, and a sin in the other. Justice came down from heaven, and descended upon mankind, as a communication of a divine perfection flowing from him whose great attribute is to be the Just One, and the rewarder of every man according to his works.

As for the assumption of the argument, that the exercise of this great blessing of the world, justice, cannot take place, unless it be lawful to prosecute offenders before courts and judges; it is a thing that requires no laborious proof. For can we expect that thieves and murderers should come and surrender their persons to the vengeance of the law freely, and of their own accord, as scorning all arrests, and preventing attachments by sheriffs, constables, and such other necessary instruments of force? Will they arraign themselves, be both jury and evidence, and stand convict by the generous openness of their own confession? When and where do we read of any instance or example of such strange transactions? When men by frequent villanies have lost even common honesty, may justice expect satisfaction from their ingenuity? But these are unlikelihoods not to be insisted upon; and we may well venture the issue of the whole controversy upon this, that when these things come to pass, then the prosecution of causes at law will cease to be allowable.

(2.) The second argument is this; that if Christian religion absolutely prohibits and disallows all pursuit of a man's right at law: then the strict observance of this religion unavoidably draws after it the utter dissolution of all government and society; a sad consequence, but naturally issuing from such an antecedent. For does not society consist in a due distinction of propriety amongst men, and in their peaceable and secure enjoying that of which they are proprietors? Do not all public bodies bear upon the great basis of *meum* and *tuum* between particular persons, and upon the provision it makes to protect those persons in their respective titles to what they possess? And moreover, is not the foundation of all just possession, a just acquisition; as by gift, labour, or the like, by which the world shares the common benefits of nature, dividing to each man his portion, and enclosing it to him from the encroachments and pretences of all others? These things, I suppose, must be granted to be the very fundamentals and first uniting principles of society.

But now, if there be no coercive power to call men to account for their actions; when the world shall be infested with the violent and the unjust, who will not labour, but yet possess; who are nobody's heirs, and yet will inherit; raising a new claim, upon force, rapine, and oppression: what will become of order, of propriety, and right? all those hinges upon which the affairs of mankind and the peace of nations move and depend?

He that has the strongest arm, the sharpest sword, the boldest front, and the falsest heart, must possess the world. Whatsoever he grasps must be his own: *right* and *possession* will be terms convertible. The meek and the injured part of mankind shall retain a right to nothing, but to patience under the insultations of the mighty and the unjust, and shall see that they can be lawfully nothing else but miserable, when the very plea of the law itself is rendered unlawful. And, what is the greatest misery of all, these bonds of oppression must be bound upon men by the ties of religion. Thieves rob us of our goods, and **then** this robs us of our remedies. And men will persuade us, that Jesus Christ makes it our duty to be poor, wretched, injured, forlorn, and destitute, as often as it shall please the lawless avarice and insolence of our enemies to make us so.

Had the primitive Christians owned this to have been the genius and true intent of what they professed, it would quickly have hissed Christianity out of the world, as the bane of government, and the destroyer of whatsoever was settled, regular, and excellent amongst men. It would have exposed it both to the scorn and hatred of all governors. And the setting up the profession of it in any kingdom would have been like the bringing of a public plague into the bowels of a nation; or the courting of a foreign invasion, to trample down all before them with ruin and confusion. For surely the removal of all courts of judicature would have had no less mischievous effects upon a people, than either of those annoyances. But had this been the design of Christianity, there is no doubt but all nations would have stood upon their guard, and kept it off like a pest; and courts of judicature would sooner have suppressed this religion, than this religion could have beat down those courts.

I conclude therefore, that it is far from the purpose of Christ's doctrine to forbid injured persons to take their course at law; under the gospel, courts are to be as much open as churches. And to plead the cause of the afflicted, the fatherless, and the widow, is but part of that great office which God has honoured, by sometimes assuming it to himself. Christianity came to invest the world with new helps and privileges, and not to abridge men of their old. This religion has provided no asylum for thieves or murderers; it neither secures nor sanctifies wrong or oppression. And therefore that opinion, which lays this as a block in their way, who would proceed to a legal recovery of their rights, is to be rejected, as absurd and insufferable.

Yet since men are too prone to stretch their just allowances beyond their bounds, to abuse privileges, and to spoil a due action by undue circumstances of prosecution; I shall therefore, in the third and last place, briefly propose those conditions that are **required** to warrant men in their law proceedings and contentions. And they are three.

(1.) First, that a man takes not this course against any one, but upon a very great and urgent cause. ~~Every~~ little wrong and trespass is not a sufficient warrant for me to disturb my neighbour's peace, and to make him miserable. It must be a loud and a clamorous injury, that has broken in upon a man's reputation or estate, so that one cannot be entire nor the other safe without a reparation, which must give him a lawful call, to use so sharp a remedy. But those uncharitable, unworthy motives, that usually act men in these prosecutions, sufficiently declare how much they deviate from the rules of religion: for what ~~more~~ usual than such kind of speeches, "I will spend five hundred, a thousand pounds, but I will have my will." So that, it seems, it is not so much to have right, as to have their will, for which some go to law. But let me say to such, that God will spend a thousand, nay, ten thousand curses upon them, but that he will fully punish such a wicked and unmerciful disposition.

(2.) Supposing that the wrong is great, and calls for reparation, yet in the next place it is required that a man be willing, upon any tolerable and just terms, to agree with his adversary, rather than to proceed to a suit: otherwise he does not sacrifice to justice or to necessity, but to a litigious humour and an ill-nature, that loves contention for contention's sake, and descends to it, not as a remedy, but a recreation: he designs not to advantage himself, but to afflict and harrass his adversary; and therefore is willing to undergo the trouble and misery of following the suit himself, only for the base pleasure of seeing another miserable.

For surely it must be a very strange height of virulence, that shall make a man thus prefer the continuance of a quarrel before an amicable composure of it! when Providence is pleased to order the state of things so, that litigiousness is not only a great, but also a very troublesome, laborious, and costly sin. A man cannot be wicked in this respect, but with the expense of much money, the labour of long attendances, and the anxiety of much care. And when a man has wisely made a shift to recover one hundred pounds with the expense of three, and for many terms run up and down, backwards and forwards, sedulously and industriously to no purpose; he will find those words of the apostle to the Corinthians, ready upon every slight cause to prosecute one another at law, "Why do you not rather take wrong? why do you not suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" to have been not so much a lesson of piety, as of policy, thrift, and good husbandry. And surely if we compare the charges, vexation, and noise of a suit, with that pitiful design which for the most part is driven at by it; if thus contentiously to go to law be a sin, as undoubtedly it is; why then we need look no further, nor enjoin such a one any other penance, but that he should go to law again.

(3.) But thirdly and lastly, supposing that both the wrong is

in itself very great, and no satisfaction or conditions of agreement are offered by him that did it, but that the injured person must of necessity commence a suit against him; yet then it is required, that he manage it by the rule of charity, and not with any purpose to revenge himself upon his adversary. But certainly it is a very rare thing, and seldom found, to see a man of so clear a breast, so sincere a design, as to have waded through such prosecutions without any interposal of vindictive thoughts. The action indeed, as I have proved, is in itself lawful, but the person that is to manage it is weak and sinful, and it is ten to one but his corruption strikes in, and bears a share in what he does; and then the issue of the whole business turns but to the accounts of sin: and when the suit is ended here below, there is an action of revenge brought against him in the court above. And therefore, though he who thus chooses to right himself does lawfully; yet (except in cases of extremity) certainly that man does more safely, who considers that he is but weak, and so offers not himself to the temptation.

And thus I have finished the resolution of the last case propounded, and I hope have stated the controversy with that truth and equality, that I have not at all derogated from the law of God, while I asserted the laws of men.

## SERMON XX.

## PART IV.

## CHRISTIANS EXHORTED TO LIVE PEACEABLY.

## ROMANS XII. 18.

*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

WHEN I first entered upon these words, I laid the prosecution of them in the discussion of these four particulars.

I. To show what was included in this great duty of living peaceably.

II. What were the measures and proportions by which it was to be determined.

III. What were the means by which it was to be effected.

IV. What were the motives and arguments by which it might be enforced.

The first two of these I have at length despatched ; and the last two, as containing nothing of controversy, but being of plain and practical consideration, I shall finish in this discourse, and conclude this subject.

III. And first, for *the means conducive to our performance of this excellent duty*, I shall, amongst those many that possibly each man's particular experience may better suggest to him, select and reckon these.

1. A careful suppression of all distasteful, but however of all aggravating apprehensions of any ill turn or unkind behaviour from men. He that will preserve himself in a regular course of acting, must not only attend the last issues of the performance, but watch the beginnings, and secure the fountains of action ; and he will find it but a vain attempt to oppose it in its birth, when he should have encountered it in its conception. A great sin or a great virtue is a long time in forming and preparing within, and passing through many faculties before it is ripe for execution. And when that chain of preparations is laid, this perhaps is then necessary and unavoidable. As when a man has fixed his thoughts upon an affront offered him, resented it sharply, and rolled it in his mind a long time, so that the rancour of those thoughts begins to reach and infect the passions, and they begin to rise and swell, and those also to possess the will, so that this

espouses it into full resolves and purposes of revenge: it is then too late to command a man under these dispositions and proximities of action, to be peaceable; he is possessed and full, and admits of no advice. The malicious design has got head and maturity; and therefore will certainly pass into act, and rage in a man's behaviour, to the degree of railing, or downright blows, or perhaps bloodshed; or some other instance of a great mischief.

But had a man, by an early wariness and observance of his teeming thoughts, crushed those infant sharpnesses, those first disgusts and grudgings, that began to sour and torment his whole mind; he would have found the humour curable and conquerable: and for all these seeds and little essays of disturbance, yet as to the main event of practice, he must have passed for a peaceable man.

Has a man therefore received an injury, a disrespect, or something at least that he thinks to be so; if he would now maintain himself in a due composure of spirit, and stop the sallings out of a hasty and indecent revenge, and all this with success and a certainty of effect; let him first arrest his thoughts, and divert them to some other object. Let him but do this easy violence to himself, as to think of something else: amongst those thousand things in the world that may be thought on, let him fix upon any one; as his business, his studies, or the news of the time: but amongst other things, let the thoughts be directed rather to reconciling objects, such as are apt to leave a pleasure and a sweetness upon the mind; as a man's lawful and innocent recreations, the delights of a journey, of a cured sickness, or an escaped danger, or the like. But chiefly, let the thoughts be busied upon such things as are peculiar and proper antidotes against the grudge conceived. As, let a man remember whether he never received a courtesy from that person who he thinks has provoked him; and let him consider, whether that courtesy did not outweigh the present injury, and was not done with greater circumstances of kindness, than this of disrespect. Now by such arts and methods of diverting the thoughts, the quick sense of the injury will by degrees be eluded, weakened, and baffled into nothing: and the grudge will strike a man's apprehensions but as a gentle breath of air does his face, with a transient, undiscernible touch, leaving behind it neither sign nor impression.

For we must know that it is the morose dwelling of the thoughts upon an injury, a long and sullen meditation upon a wrong, that incorporates and rivets it into the mind. And upon this reason it is ill affronting the melancholy and the thinking man, whose natural temper and complexion lays what he has observed before him, by more frequent remembrances, and more stable and permanent representations, so that the mind has



opportunity to carry its examination to every particular circumstance, part, degree, and occasion of the affront, brooding upon it with such a close and continued intention, till it binds the remembrance and resentment of it upon the soul, with bands of iron and links of brass, never to be dissolved, or fetched asunder, by time, or kindness, or any after-attempts of reconciliation.

If a man will indulge his thoughts upon a disrespect offered him; he will find how by degrees they will raise and advance, and get the mastery of him. That which first did but lightly move, shall presently warm, then heat, afterwards chafe, and at length fire and inflame him: and now the evil is grown mighty and invincible, and swelled into a strange unlimitedness, so that that which perhaps but a week or two ago was no more than a slight displeasure, and to be smiled, or talked, or slept away, is now like to go off like a clap of thunder, to scatter a huge ruin, and determine in something dismal and tragical.

We shall find that this way of thinking had the like effect upon David, but upon a better subject, in Psalm xxxix. 3, "My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue." We see here the gradation by which this holy man's thoughts led his zeal up to its full height. In like manner, when an injury has passed upon a man, he begins to muse upon it, and upon this his heart grows hot within him, and at length the fire burns, and then he speaks with his tongue; perhaps railing and reviling: and it is well, if in the issue he does not also strike with his hand. The lion has not always such a present supply of fierceness, as to fit him to fly upon his prey, till by the echoes of his own roarings, and the frequent striking of himself with his train, he has called up his drowsy spirits, and summoned his rage to attend his appetite, and so fully chafed himself into his natural fury; and then he is a lion indeed, and to meet him is death, and to behold him a terror next to it. This is exactly the case of the angry and contentious man; he provokes and works up himself to a passion by a restless employment of thought upon some injury done him; till from a man he grows into a beast of prey, and becomes implacable and intolerable. Surely therefore it concerns the virtuous and the wary, and such as know how absolutely necessary it is to conduct every action of piety by the rules of prudence, to endeavour peaceableness, by keeping down the first inconsiderable annoyances and disturbances of it, which like the mustard-seeds in their first sowing are very small and contemptible, but being grown up, shoot out into branches and arms, spread into a vast compass, and settle into a firm strength and consistency of body.

Compare a disgust in its beginnings and after its continuance, in the first appearance and the last effects of it; and we shall find the disproportions monstrous and unmeasureable. No man is able to give laws to an overgrown humour, and to grapple with

a corruption ripe and armed with all its advantages. Who would think, when he sees a little spring-head, and beholds the narrowness of its circle, its quiet bubblings and small emissions, that by that time this little thing had crope three or four miles off, it should be spacious in its breadth, formidable in its depth, grow insolent in a tempest, rise and foam and wrestle with the winds, laugh at every thing in its way, and bear its conquering stream over dams and locks, and all opposition. Why thus also it is with the mind of man: after he is offended, if he will not be brought to discharge his thoughts of the offence, he may think and think so long, till he has thought a distasteful apprehension into an action of murder.

But as in order to a man's keeping of the peace, both with himself and others, it highly lies upon him to give no entertainment to disgustful thoughts, conceived from the behaviour of men towards him; so he is much more to abandon and take heed of all aggravating thoughts. If he will not pass over and forget an offence, at least he is not to heighten it; to make that great, which is but small; and numerous, that is but single. If a man were to chastise a child for a fault, and presently by an error of fancy should persuade himself, that certainly that child was some great porter, and should measure out stripes to him accordingly; there is no doubt but the injury would quickly appear in a sad effect.

There are indeed no venial sins towards God, but there are between men; and therefore he who shall prosecute a venial offence with a mortal hatred, and swell a mole-hill into a mountain, beholding every thing under new created heights and additions; he betrays a turbulent disposition, and a mind to which peace and the spirit of peace is wholly a stranger.

It is not unusual to hear such speeches fall from some mouths: He did such a thing purposely to spite me; had he not known that I disgusted it, it had never been spoken or done by him. Whereas perhaps the man, in the word or action for which he is censured, thought no hurt, much less designed any; but did it by an innocent carelessness, not sufficiently alarmed by an experience of the baseness, the falseness, and the exceptionousness of men, to set a greater caution or guard upon his behaviour; or perhaps, take it at the worst, it was a word extorted from him by the exasperation of his spirit, and before he was aware, borne upon the wings of passion, and so quickly out of his reach, and not to be recalled.

But shall we now play the exactors and the tyrants, squeezing every supposed irregularity till we fetch blood, and according to that unworthy course condemned in Isaiah xxix. 21, "make a man an offender for a word?" Are we so perfect ourselves, as to need no allowances, no remissions, no favourable interpretations of what we do or say? Or are we so unjust, as when we need these things ourselves, to deny them to others?

Would any one be willing to be taken upon an advantage? to have every slip and weakness of his discourse critically observed, every inadvertency in his behaviour maliciously scanned, and at length heightened, and blown up to a crime, or a great accusation? Surely there is no man so privileged from the common lot of humanity or natural affections, but that he is sometimes more open and gay, free and unconcerned, and so obnoxious to the unseasonable rigours of a watching ill-natured adversary. And, on the other side, there is no man but sometimes suffers the vicissitude of trouble, business, thought, and indisposition of mind, that may cast a roughness upon his deportment, and for a while interrupt the complaisance of his converse. And shall these things be now counted grounds sufficient to build a dislike upon, that shall vent itself in the disturbance of a man's peace, the hatred of his person, the undermining of his interest, and the extinguishing his reputation? It is as certain as certainty itself, that oftentimes they do so: and therefore I have nothing to say more as to this particular, but to make use of that prayer of St. Paul, 2 Thess. iii. 2, "God deliver us from unreasonable men:" for "the way of peace such have not known."

And thus much for the first means to help us in the duty of living peaceably; namely, a mature and careful suppression of all distasteful, but especially of all aggravating apprehensions, either of the defective or faulty instances of men's behaviour towards us.

2. A second sovereign means conducing to the same great purpose, is the forbearing of all pragmatical or malicious informations against those with whom we converse. It was a worthy saying of Solomon, well beseeming that reputation of wisdom which he stands renowned for in holy writ, that "he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends." The carrying of a tale, and reporting what such a one said or such a one did, is the way to sow such grudges, to kindle such heart-burnings between persons, as oftentimes break forth and flame to the consumption of families, courts, and perhaps at length of cities and kingdoms. The mischief such incendiaries do is incredible, as being indeed for the most part inevitable. And a vine or a rose-tree may as well flourish when there is a secret worm lurking and gnawing at the root of them; as the peace of those societies thrive, that have such concealed plagues wrapped up in their heart and bowels.

For let us consider the case a little. There is perhaps in some united body, collection, or society of men, some pick-thank caterpillar or other, who, either, to ingratiate himself with some great one, or to mischief some whom he maligns, or peradventure both, comes and cringes and whispers, and tells his story, and possibly with some dissembled expressions of respect to the person whom he is about to ruin; as that he is heartily sorry that such a one,

whom he had always an esteem for, should so misbehave and forget himself, as to be guilty of such things as he found and heard him to be; and indeed was a long time before he could believe any such matter of him, out of the great honour he bore him. Nevertheless thus and thus it is, and he is troubled that he should be forced to be the messenger of any thing to his disadvantage.

Well, the good man has told his story, and the secret bolt is shot: let us now see into how many cursed consequences this viperous piece of villany is like to spread itself; and that, whether we consider the accusation as true or as false; as relating to the person accused, or to him before whom he is accused. And first we will take the allegation that such informers usually make in their own behalf, that truly they said nothing but what was truth, and they conceive truth may be lawfully spoken. Very good! Be it therefore a truth. But yet give me leave to ask such persons a few questions: as whether a truth may not be reported with as malicious a design as the greatest falsity that ever was hatched in hell; and whether to tell a truth with the purposes of malice, be not a sin of as black a hue in the accounts of heaven, as to contrive and tell a downright lie. I would also ask, whether the person who told this truth would have been as ready to tell it, had it made for the other's advantage as much as it does for his prejudice: and whether he would be willing that every thing should be told and published which is true of himself. I believe the answer to these interrogatories would appear but very lame and imperfect.

But since truth is a thing that seldom dwells in the mouths and discourses of informers, we will suppose the accusation to be, as for the most part it is, really false. And that either as to the very matter of it, there being absolutely no such thing as is reported; or at least in respect of some portion and circumstance of the narration; some little thing being added, over and above the true state of the matter, or something being concealed that should have been mentioned: either of which may make such an alteration in the case, that that which one way is innocent and allowable, the other way becomes impious, vile, and criminal. It is in such reports as it is in numbers, the addition or detraction but of one unit makes it presently another number.

But now if we proceed further, and direct the consequences of this degenerate practice to the persons concerned in it; as first, to him that is informed against: we shall find that whether the information be true or false, his condition is very miserable. For if it be true, all opportunities of deprecating his offence, and of reconciling himself to the person offended, are cut off and taken out of his hands; but in the mean time, the accusation lies festering in the other's mind to whom it is delivered, waiting only for an occasion suddenly to attack or ruin the poor man, who knows not of the cloud which hangs over him, nor of the snare that is

spread under him; but is snapped and destroyed before he is aware, without any remedy or escape. But if the things deposed against him be false, as frequently they both are and may very well be, by reason of the accuser's presumption that he shall never be brought to vouch or prove what he has said; why then an innocent person, unheard, untried, and bereaved of all power to clear himself, and to confute his accuser, is concluded against, and condemned; his sentence is passed, the purpose of his ruin sealed, and the man is blown up before ever he understands that there is so much as any crime, accusation, or accuser of him in the world. And is not this a horrid and a barbarous thing, and a perversion of the very designs of society? For to what purpose do men unite and convene into corporations, if the mischiefs they suffer under them are greater than those that attend them in a state of dispersion and open hostility?

Certainly it is a grievance to nature, and to that common reason and justice which presides over mankind, to see a brave, an upright, and a virtuous person fall by the informations and base arts of an atheist, a sycophant, and an empty dressed fellow; such a one, that if but one third part of mankind were like him, neither God nor man would think the world worth preservation. And yet such are the men that overthrow virtue, disappoint merit, and render the rewards of the good and the vicious accidental and promiscuous: and in a word, are the pests and vermin that disturb and infest society.

But neither is the poor, accused, ruined person the only one that is abused and injured by the false and malicious informer, but even he who by such information is brought to ruin him. For is it not the worst of injuries, that such a wretch should make a great person the instrument of his sin, and the prosecutor of his malice, and all this by abusing his intellectuals with a lie? deceiving and cheating him with false persuasions, in order to a gaining him to a base or a cruel action; first blinding his eye, and then using his hand, and making him to do that upon a false representation of things, which, had he been rightly informed of, he would not have done for a world. It is like the making of a man drunk, and then causing him to sign a deed for the passing away of his estate. In short, it is a daring encroachment and an intolerable injury. And if there were any one that might lawfully not be forgiven, it is this.

But the abuse rests not here; for such sycophants by these practices do not only abuse men in their understanding, their interest, and their peace, by first making them to believe a falsehood, and then to sacrifice a friend or an innocent man to such a belief; but further, they abuse them in that very instance for which they accuse others. It being very frequent, nay my own little experience has observed it, that those who are so officious, by the traducing of others, to fawn, cog, and flatter men

to their faces, are as apt to vilify them behind their backs as any other whatsoever: nay, the matter of the accusation by which they secretly stab others, are usually some unwary expressions slipped from those persons, while they have been trepanned into a compliance with the informer's discourse, in his undervaluing, upbraiding, and detracting from the same men, before whom afterwards he is so diligent to accuse them.

Now in this case there is nothing so much to be wished for, as that some lucky hand of Providence would bring the person informed against, and the person to whom he was informed against, together; that they might compare notes, and confer what the informer had said on both sides. And the truth is, so it falls out by a strange connexion and trace of events, that usually such whisperers are discovered, and that that which passing from the mouth is but a whisper, from the echo and rebound becomes a voice: the effect of which is, that a vile person comes to be understood, and then to be abhorred, and to be pointed at as he passes by, with such kind of eulogies as these: "There goes a person for whom no one breathing was ever the better, but many ruined, blasted, and undone; the scourge of society, a spit-poison, a viper, and to be abandoned and shunned by all companies, like a mortal infection: and yet withal so despicable, so detested, and that amidst the greatest successes of his base projects, that the condition of him who is most ruined by him, even while he is ruined, is much more eligible and desirable; as of the two, I know no man, but had rather be spit upon by a toad than be a toad."

I wonder what such persons think, or propose to themselves, when they come to affront God in his house, praying, hearing sermons, and receiving sacraments; when there is no sin or corruption incident to the depraved nature of man, that more peculiarly unfits them for this divine and blessed duty, than the sin that we have been discoursing of. And I am confident, that when such a person thrusts himself upon the ordinance, and receives the consecrated elements; he yet partakes no more of the body and blood of Christ, or the real benefits of them, than the rat that gnaws the bread, a creature like himself, close, mischievous, and contemptible.

We have seen here how much such persons and practices interrupt the peace of societies; but yet we are to know that the burden of this charge is not so wholly to lie upon the framers and bringers of such informations, but that some is to rest upon those also who are ready to hear them. For as there is a parity of guilt between the thief and the receiver, so there seems to be the like between the teller and the hearer of a malicious report; and that upon very great reason. For who would knock, where he despaired of entrance? or what husbandman would cast his seed but into an open and a prepared furrow? so it is most cer-

that ill tongues would be idle, if ill ears were not open. And therefore it was an apposite saying of one of the ancients, that both the teller and the hearer of false stories ought equally to be hanged, but one by the tongue, the other by the ears: and were every one of them so served, I suppose nobody would be so fond of those many mischiefs brought by such persons upon the peace of the world, as to be concerned to cut them down, unless, perhaps, by cutting off the forementioned parts, by which they hung.

But when there is a conspiracy and an agreement on both sides, and one ill-nature tells a tale, and another ill-nature thanks him for it; and so encourages him in the custom, by showing how ready he is to hear his words, and to do the intended mischief; so that the ball is kept up, by being tossed from one hand to the other; let not that society or company of men, who are blessed with such persons amongst them, expect any such thing as peace; they may as well expect that the winter sun will ripen their summer fruits, or the breath of the north wind preserve their blossoms. No; they will find, that the blasts of contention will blow and whistle about their ears, and a storm arise which shall endanger their tranquillity to an utter shipwreck, without any possibility of being appeased, but by throwing such wretches and renegadoes from God and good-nature overboard.

Let this therefore be the second means to advance us in the duty of living peaceably; namely, to abominate such practices ourselves, and to discountenance them in others. It is a prescription easy and sovereign, and such a one as will not fail in the experiment: but according to the proportions of its efficacy, will manifest a certain and a happy influence, for the restoring of peace, and the refreshing of human converse: for when the troublers of Israel are removed, the trouble of it must needs cease.

And thus much for the second means of maintaining the duty of peaceableness.

3. The third that I shall prescribe is, that men would be willing in some cases to wave the prosecution of their rights, and not too rigorously to insist upon them. There are some things which it may be lawful for a man to do, but falling under cross circumstances, may be infinitely inexpedient. To require reparation for a wrong, is a thing good and lawful; but sometimes it may be done so unseasonably, that peace, which is a much better thing, is lost by it. That same *stomachus cedere nescius* found in most, is the thing that foment quarrels, and keeps men at such unpeaceable distances. I will not lose my right, says one; and I will suffer no wrong, says another: and so they enter into a conflict, both pulling and contesting, till the quietness of society is torn asunder betwixt them. Now it is here apparent, that unless one of these shall relinquish what he supposes to be his right, the

controversy must of necessity be perpetual. But certainly peace is an enjoyment so high, that it deserves to be bought at the rate of some lesser abridgements; and a man shall find that he never does himself so much right, as when upon such an occasion, he parts with his right. It may possibly be of some difficulty to assign all those instances in which peace may challenge this of us, as to surrender a right for its preservation; and though cases of this nature are as numberless, and indefinite, as particular actions and their circumstances; yet to contribute something to the conduct of our practice in so weighty and concerning a matter, I shall presume to set down some.

(1.) As first, when the recovery of a right, according to the best judgment that human reason can pass upon things, seems impossible: prudence and duty then calls upon a man to surcease the prosecution of that, and rather to follow peace. It will perhaps be replied here, that this case is superfluous and absurd, for no rational man will endeavour after that which he apprehends impossible. I answer, that this seems true indeed, did all that were rational act rationally. But besides, supposing this also; yet unless a man acts virtuously as well as rationally, he may propose to himself the prosecution of a thing impossible, not indeed with a design to obtain that thing, but for some other end or purpose: as either to gratify a humour, or to annoy an enemy, or the like. As for instance, he that should prosecute a poor widow, not worth above two mites, for the debt of a thousand talents due to him from her, yet by reason of this her great poverty, contracted by losses and misfortunes, utterly unpayable; that man prosecutes an impossible thing, and at the same time knows it to be so, and accordingly despairs of the recovery of his debt, yet he continues the suit, because his disposition may incline him to be troublesome, vexatious, and unmerciful; and where money is not to be had, to pay himself with revenge. He may be one that tastes the calamities of a ruined adversary with a high relish, and finds a music in the widow's sighs, and a sweetness in her tears.

But now, in such a case is it not rational to conclude, that Christianity calls us to peace, rather than to a fruitless prosecution of a desperate right? where Providence, by taking away all possibility and means of payment, seems to have decided the case for pardon, and the opportunities of exercising a Christian grace.

We may be also called to the same duty of not demanding our right, when the power and villany of the oppressor put the regaining of it under an impossibility. But you will reply; This is a very hard saying: for ought any one's injustice to prejudice me in the claim of my right? I answer, no: if that claim had any likely prospect of a recovery. Otherwise, what rational effect can follow it? for by all a man's clamours and suits for right, he is not at all benefited, and yet the peace is disturbed; nay, it



is enough to stamp his action irrational, that he loses his own peace without the least recompence; all his endeavours expiring into air, and vanishing with no effect: for the door of justice is shut, and his little attempts cannot force it open.

It is in a thing itself lawful and commendable, for a subject to vouch and assert the title of his prince. But should it so fall out, that a tyrant and a usurper steps up into his throne, and there surrounds himself with armed legions and a prevailing interest, so that justice and loyalty are forced to shrink in their heads, and so all purposes of resistance become wholly insignificant; will any one say that it is here the duty of any particular person to stand forth and defend his prince's claim, in defiance of the usurper, by which neither his prince's right is in the least advantaged, nor the oppressor's power at all weakened or infringed; but yet the common peace is interrupted, and a ruin brought upon his own head, and the head of his confederates?

Thus, when a bird comes to be immured in the cage, being taken from its natural range in the air and the woods, and begins to feel the injury of a restraint and the closeness of a prison, it strives and flutters to recover its native liberty; and perhaps with striving breaks a wing or a leg, and so pines away: and after all this uneasiness, is yet forced at last to die in the cage. It is so with a person overpowered in his right, and bereaved of it by those with whom he cannot grapple. Christianity and reason command him not here to labour in vain, but to make a virtue of necessity, and to acquiesce, expecting the issues of Providence, which disposes of things by a rule known only to itself. And by so doing, a man is no worse than he was before; but the peace is maintained, and the rewards of patience may be well expected.

(2.) In the second place, it seems to be a man's duty to quit the claim of his right, when that right is but trivial, small, and inconsiderable, but the recovery of it troublesome and contentious. That which being lost makes a man not much the poorer, nor recovered, much the richer, cannot authorize him to enter into the turmoil, the din, and noise of a suit, or a long contest. Nothing can warrant a man in these courses but necessity, or a great inconvenience; which in the supposed instance, is not pleadable. But he proceeds upon the dictates of humour, the suggestions of revenge, and the instigations of an unquiet disposition: the consequences of which, in this world, are but ill; and the rewards of them in the next much worse. This whole method is like the applying of corrosives, and caustics, and the most tormenting remedies, to remove the pain of a cut finger, or like the listing of armies to chase away flies: the means and the design are hugely disproportionable.

(3.) In the third place, it seems to be a man's duty to recede from his claim of any particular right, when for the injury done him he has a recompence offered him, in some good equivalent,

and perhaps greater, though of another kind. A man has deposited a jewel in another's hand; the jewel comes to be lost or stolen: but the person to whose keeping it was entrusted is willing to make him satisfaction, in paying him the full value of it in money, or in giving him another of a greater price. In which case, should the person endamaged utterly refuse all such satisfaction, and rigidly insist upon the restitution of that individual thing, he declares himself a son of contention, an enemy of peace, and an unreasonable exactor.

Nay, the equity of this extends even to those losses, for which, perhaps, no recompence perfectly equivalent can be made; yet when the utmost that the thing is capable of comes to be tendered, justice, acting by the rules of charity, will tie up the injured man from righting himself by any further prosecutions. As for instance, we will suppose a man defamed, and injured in his reputation; in this case, the word that gave him the wound cannot be unsaid again, or revoked, any more than a spent hour be called back, or yesterday brought again upon the stage of time, but it is gone and past recovery. Yet the mischief done by this word is permanent and great, it has spilt a man's good name upon the ground; which, like spilt water, cannot be gathered up again. But after this, the slanderer comes to be touched with remorse and sorrow for what he has done, acknowledges and deprecates his fault before his slandered brother; retracts his words, as publicly as they were spoken, offers him a large sum of money or a great advantage: what now is the injured person to do in this condition? True it is that a good name is unvaluable; and all the pelf in the world is not an equal ransom for it. Yet it is also as true, that no quarrel, how just soever, ought to be immortal; but ought to be let fall upon due reparation: and the very nature of this case admits of no other or greater reparation than what has been offered. Should it therefore be flung back in the offerer's face, and the action of slander go on rigorously and inexorably, I am afraid the scene would be altered, and that he who prosecutes his right, having yet more malice than right of his side, would, in the estimate of the supreme Judge, from the injured person turn to be the injurious.

The like may be said in the loss of a limb, or any part of the body, as an eye or an arm. Certain it is, that he who has struck out my eye, or cut off my arm, has not the magazines of nature so in his power, as to be able to give me another; nor will all his estate recompence the injury of a maimed, deformed body: yet if he will endeavour to give me the best recompence my sad condition will receive; and make up the loss of these with supplies of other advantages: I must be contented, and lie down patiently under my calamity, no longer owning it under the notion of an injury, from the man that did it, but as a sad pro-

vidence from heaven, as an arrow shot from the bow in the clouds, to punish my sins and to exercise my patience. And therefore all suits, and actions, and endeavours after a severe retribution must be let fall; I must not vex, worry, and undo him. The eye that God has left me must not be evil, because man has robbed me of the other; nor the remaining arm stretched out to revenge the blow that lopped off its fellow.

And thus I have shown the cases in which the duty we all owe to peace may command us sometimes to remit the rigid prosecutions of our right; which was the third means proposed to give success to our endeavours after peaceableness.

4. A fourth is, much to reflect upon the great example of Christ, and the strict injunction lying upon us to follow it. We shall find that his whole life went in a constant recession from his own rights, in order to the tranquillity and peace of the public: he was born heir to the kingdom of the Jews, yet never vouched his title, but quietly saw the sceptre in a usurper's hand; and lived and died under the government of those who had no right to govern. When tribute was demanded of him, he clearly demonstrated the case to Peter, in Matt. xvii. 24—26, that they had neither right to demand, nor he obligation to pay any; yet in ver. 27, we find that he would be at the expense of little less than a miracle, rather than, by refusing to obey an unjust exaction, to disturb the peace. "Lest we should offend them," says he to Peter, "go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up: and thou shalt find a piece of money in his mouth; that take, and give for me and thee." But what if they had been offended, it had been but an offence taken, not given: for where nothing is due, nothing was to be paid, nor consequently to be demanded; yet so tender was he of the public peace, that he waved all these pleas and arguments, and complied with the common practice.

Nay, and what is more, in the great concernment of his life, rather than occasion a tumult, or any unpeaceable disorder, though amongst persons then about the greatest villany that ever the sun saw; he quitted the grand right of self-preservation: which case, though it was peculiar and extraordinary, and so obliges not us to every particular of the action; yet the design of peaceableness, which induced him to such a behaviour, calls for our imitation in general, that we should be willing to break many high inconveniences, rather than be the occasions of any public disturbance. They sent out an inconsiderable company with swords and staves to apprehend him; but what could this pitiful body of men have done to prejudice his life, who, with much more ease than Peter drew his sword, could have summoned more angels to his assistance, than there were legions of men marching under the Roman eagles? But he chose rather to resign himself silently and unresistingly, like a lamb to the

slaughter, and so to recommend the excellency of patience to all his disciples, in a strange instance and a great example.

Now I suppose that it needs not much labour to evince, that what Christ did, upon a moral account, equally engages the practice of his disciples, according to their proper degree and proportion. And therefore we are to study those divine lessons of peace, to admire and conform to his behaviour, to transcribe his copy, and to read a precept in every one of his actions. And this is the fourth means to enable us to quit ourselves in the great duty of peaceableness.

5. The fifth and last which I shall propose, which surely, for its efficacy and virtue, will be inferior to none of the former, is this; not to adhere too pertinaciously and strictly to our own judgments of things doubtful in themselves, in opposition to the judgment of our superiors, or others who may be rationally supposed more skilful in those things. If we pursue most of those contentions which afflict the world, to their first principle, we shall find that they issue from pride, and pride from self-opinion, and a strange persuasion that men have of their knowledge of those things of which they are indeed ignorant. I am not for the implicit faith of the papists, or for any man to pluck out his own eyes, and to be guided by another man's, in matters plain, obvious, and apprehensible; and of which common reason, without the assistance of art and study, is a competent judge. But surely in things difficult and controverted, the learned, who have made it their business to wade into those depths, should be consulted and trusted to, before the rash and illiterate determinations of any particular man whatsoever.

The not doing of which, I am sure, has ruined the peace of this poor church, and shaken it into such unsettlements, that the youngest person alive is not like to see it recovered to its full strength, vigour, and establishment. There is not the least retainer to a conventicle, but thinks he understands the whole business of religion, as well as the most studied and profound doctor in the nation. And for those things that by pious and mature deliberation, grounded upon the word of God and the constant practice of antiquity, have been ordained for the better and more decent management of divine worship, there is scarce any preaching, discontented ignoramus, any groaning old woman, or any factious shopkeeper, who, for want of custom, sits reading the bible, but will very pertly, and, as they think, also very judiciously, call them in question. For of those many thousands who use to read the scripture, there are few who understand it, and fewer who think they do not; whereupon they venture on all occasions to affix such bold interpretations on the most concerning passages, as either their interest or their ignorance shall suggest.

And having, upon such pitiful grounds, taken up an opinion,  
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they are as ready to fight for it, and to assert it with the last drop of their blood. Armies shall be raised, swords drawn, and the peace of a kingdom sacrificed, to a notion as absurdly conceived as impudently defended. Laws must be repealed, or lie unexecuted, customs abrogated, and sovereignty itself must be forced to bow before the exceptions of a tender conscience; and to give way to every religious opinator, who is pleased to judge his peculiar sentiments in sacred matters the great standard of truth, to which all must conform. For though they deny a conformity to the church in its constitutions, yet they think it very reasonable, nay necessary, that the church should conform to them; whereas it is most certain from experience, that such persons seldom persist so steadily in any one opinion, as for a year's space to conform thoroughly to themselves.

I conclude therefore, that there is no such bane of the common peace, as a confident singularity of opinion: for men's opinions shall rule their practices, and when their practices shall get head and countenance, they shall overrule the laws. If when men shall refuse to yield obedience to statute and government, and for such refusal plead that their conscience will not give them leave to think such obedience lawful, and for this assign no other reason, but because they are resolved to think so, or allege some places of scripture, which they will be sure to understand in their own sense, though persons much more numerous and knowing than they understand them in a far different one; and then, after all, shall have this accepted by governors, as a sufficient reason to exempt them from the common obligation that the law designs to lay upon every subject; there is no doubt but that, by this course, the very foundation of peace and government will quickly be unsettled, and the whole fabric of church and state thrown back into its former confusion.

And thus much for the third particular proposed for the handling the words, namely, to show by what means we might be enabled to the great duty of living peaceably. I come now to

IV. The fourth and last; which is to show, *what are the motives and arguments by which this duty may be enforced.* I suppose, many may be gathered here and there from what has been already delivered, and therefore I shall be the briefer in this.

1. The first enforcing argument that I shall propound, shall be taken from the excellency of the thing itself; which indeed is so great, that the highest appellations of honour recorded in scripture are derived from peace. God himself is pleased to insert it amongst his own titles, and to be called "the God of peace," Rom. xv. 33. It is also the honourable name of the Messiah, that he was to be "the Prince of peace," Isaiah ix. 6; and that in the most eminent manner that could be: for he designed the time of his nativity when there was a general peace

over the whole world in the reign of Augustus Cæsar. And the first message that was sent from heaven upon his nativity was a message of peace, Luke ii. 14, "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good-will towards men." The whole doctrine that by himself and his apostles he preached to mankind, is called "the gospel of peace," and "the word of peace," Rom. x. 15. The last legacy that he bequeathed to his disciples at his departure out of the world was a legacy of peace; John xiv. 27, "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." And the works of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of believers are expressed by the same thing, Gal. v. 22, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace." And in the last place, both the effects and rewards of piety are set forth by this, Rom. xv. 13, "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." In a word, there is no one virtue or excellent quality in the world, from which there be half so many denominations of honour and expressions of blessing taken by the penmen of holy writ, as from peace. It is the very style and phrase of scripture; and if I should endeavour to mention how often it is thus used in it, I must not so much quote particular texts, as transcribe books and chapters.

Now certainly that must needs be a glorious thing, that thus gives titles of glory to the Prince of glory, that thus fills the heraldry of heaven, and calls gifts, graces, blessings, and every good thing, after its own name. The heathen custom was to derive their names of honour from the triumphs of war, as Numidicus, Asiaticus, Africanus: but Christian religion, that came to unite and cement society, to compose differences, and to conquer minds only, has made up its catalogue of honours with names of peace, a virtue of a more benign nature, that can adorn one man without the disgrace of another.

2. The second motive to peace shall be taken from the excellency of the principle from which peaceableness of spirit proceeds. It is from a pious, a generous, and a great mind. Little things are querulous; and the wasp much more angry and troublesome than the eagle. He that can slight affronts, despise revenge, and rather suffer an inconvenience than employ his passion to remove it, declares himself above the injuries of men, and that though others would disturb him, yet he will not be disturbed, he is too strong to be shaken; and so, has both his quietness and his reputation in his own keeping.

Now certainly it is more desirable to be such a person, than to be a subject and a slave to every man's distemper and imprudence; for so he is whom every man is able to exasperate and disquiet: he has let go his happiness, and put it into the power of those who regard not their own, and therefore is forced to be miserable, whensoever any other man may think fit to be proud, insolent, and passionate. I suppose I need no greater argument

to recommend a peaceable temper, than the misery of such a condition.

3. The third motive to peace shall be taken from the consequent blessing entailed upon it by a peculiar promise, Matt. v. 9, "Blessed are the peace-makers;" and I may add, by a parity of reason, no less blessed are the peace-preservers. The treasures of heaven are opened, and the designs of Providence laid to serve the interest of the peaceable. All contingencies, unusual passages and casualties of affairs, shall conspire into a happy event, in reference to such persons. For when God intends a blessing, a blessing with an emphasis and a peculiarity, as he does here, he takes a man into a nearer tuition, espouses his concerns, directs his actions, and orders his occasions.

I do not doubt but the blessing here pronounced to the peaceable is such a one as reaches heaven, and runs forth into eternity, and does not determine in these transient enjoyments and earthly felicities; yet since these also lie in the bowels of the promise, and may come in as a fair overplus, or serve as a comfortable earnest of those great happinesses that as yet are but within our prospect; I shall take notice of two instances of this blessing, that will certainly attend the peaceable in this world.

(1.) The first is an easy, undisturbed, and quiet enjoyment of themselves. While a man is careful to keep the peace with others, he will in the rebound find the influence of it upon himself. He has no enmities to prosecute, no revenges to beware of, no suspicions to discompose his mind. But he that will disturb others, of necessity casts himself under all those evils. For he that affronts or injures a man, must be at the trouble to make that affront good; he must also expect that the affronted person waits for an opportunity to repay him with a shrewd recompence: whereupon he is to be always upon his guard, to hearken and look about, and contrive how he may frustrate the intended blow. All which is a continual torment and a sad vexation; and like being upon the watch every night, while others are at their rest.

But then the chiefest misery of all is this, that as it is a very restless, so it is a very needless condition. For what necessity is there that I should undertake the trouble of troubling another? Why should I take so much pains to be disturbed and out of order, when the charge at which I may purchase my own quietness is no greater than only to let other men enjoy theirs? If I should strike any one a great blow on the teeth, it is very probable that I may bruise my own hand, as well as hurt his face. But the peaceable man is composed and settled in the midst of those disturbances that embroil the world round about him. He can sleep in a storm, because he had no hand in the raising it. He conjured no evil spirit up, and so is not put upon the trouble to conjure him down again. He is like a sword rest-

ing in its scabbard, which by that means both hurts nobody and preserves itself.

(2.) The other instance of the great blessing attending the peaceable in this world, is that honour and reputation which such a temper of mind and course of life fixes upon their persons. Every one looks upon such a man as a public blessing, as a gift from heaven, as a help and remedy to the frailties and miseries of mankind. There is none but is forced to confess, that he has been the better for such a one; and consequently, to acknowledge a debt to Providence, that ever he knew him or conversed with him.

But on the contrary, is there any one that prays for or honours a plague, a rat, a serpent, or, which is worse than all, a false and a malicious informer? As amongst all the trees and plants of the earth the bramble is the most troublesome, so it is also the most contemptible. It is the great and notable curse of the earth to bear briars and thorns: and it is also their doom to be burnt; and I know nobody that would find a miss of them. For when such persons are removed, afflicted society seem to have a little respite and time of breathing: for while they have scope to act the mischief of their temper, they are like some flies, that first by their venom make a sore, and then set upon it and afflict it.

But it being the nature of mankind to fasten an honour there only where they find either something like to God, or beneficial to themselves; let not such nuisances think, that any generous mind can either honour or effect them; for such can be considerable for nothing, but because they are able to do mischief; and I know nothing so vile or base in nature, but that sometimes it has power to do hurt. Is there any thing more weak and pitiful than a flea or a gnat? and yet they have sting and sharpness enough to trouble a wise man.

It is therefore the peaceable mind only, the mind which studies how to compose, and heal, and bind up the bleeding wounds of society, that is truly great and honourable. The name of such is like an ointment poured forth, which we know is both healing and fragrant. Honour and respect court them and pursue them; and when they have finished a glorious life here, ennobled by the good offices done by them, their report survives them, and their memory is blessed. Their name is glorified upon earth, and their souls in heaven.



## SERMON XXI.

DEATH THE WAGES OF SIN.

ROMANS VI. 23.

*The wages of sin is death.*

THE two great things which make such a disturbance in the world, are sin and death; the latter both the effect and punishment of the former. Sin, I confess, is an obvious subject, and the theme almost of every discourse; but yet it is not discoursed of so much, but that it is committed much more: it being like that ill custom spoken of by Tacitus in Rome, *semper vetabitur, semper retinebitur*. But while the danger continues, we must not give over the alarm; nor think a discourse of sin superfluous, while the commission of it is continual, and yet the prevention necessary.

In the words, we have a near and a close conjunction between the greatest object of the world's love, which is sin, and the greatest object of its hatred, which is death. And we see them presented to us in such a vicinity, that they are in the very confines of one another; death treading upon the heels of sin, its hateful, yet its inseparable companion. And it is wonderful to consider, that men should so eagerly court the antecedent, and yet so strangely detest the consequent; that they should pour gall into the fountain, and yet cry out of the bitterness of the stream: and lastly, which is of all things the most unreasonable, that a workman should complain that he is paid his wages.

The scope and design of the words I shall draw forth and prosecute in the discussion of these three following things.

I. I shall show what sin is, which is here followed with so severe a penalty as death.

II. I shall show what is comprised in death, which is here allotted for the sinner's wages.

III. And lastly, I shall show in what respect death is properly called "the wages of sin." Of each of which in their order. And,

I. For the first of these, *what sin is*. And according to the most known and received definition of it, it is ἀνομία, *a breach of the law*; a transgression, or leaping over those boundaries which the eternal wisdom of God has set to a rational nature; a

receding from that exact rule and measure, which God has prescribed to moral actions. This is the general notion of it; but as for the particular difficulties, disputes, and controversies, which some have started upon this subject, and by which they have made the law of God almost as ambiguous and voluminous as the laws of men, I shall waive them all; and not being desirous to be either nice or prolix, shall speak of sin only under that known division of it, into original and actual.

1. And first, for original sin. It may seem strange perhaps that sin bears date with our very being: and indeed, in some respect, prevents it. That we were sinners before we were born; and seem to have been held in the womb, not only as infants for the birth, but as malefactors in a prison. And that if we look upon our interest in this world, our forfeit was much earlier than our possession: "We are," says the apostle, "by nature children of wrath," Eph. ii. 3. Not only by depravation, or custom, and ill-contracted habits, but by nature; the first principle and source of action. And nature we know is as entire, though not as strong in an infant, as in a grown man. Indeed the strength of man's natural corruption is so great, that every man is born an adult sinner. Sin is the only thing in the word which never had an infancy, that knew no minority. *Tantillus puer, tantus peccator*, says St. Austin. Could we view things *in semine*, and look through principles, what a nest of impurities might we see in the heart of the least infant! like a knot of little snakes, wrapped up in a dunghill! What a radical, productive force of sin might we behold in all his faculties, ready upon occasion, and the maturities of age, to display itself with a cursed fertility!

There are some, I know, who deny that which we here call original sin, to be indeed properly any sin at all; and will have it at the most, not to be our fault, but our infelicity. And their reason is, because nothing can be truly and properly sin, which is not voluntary; but original corruption in infants cannot be voluntary; since it precedes all exercise of their rational powers, their understanding and their will.

But to this I answer, that original corruption in every infant is voluntary, not indeed in his own person, but in Adam his representative; whose actions, while he stood in that capacity, were virtually and by way of imputation the acts of all his posterity: as amongst us, when a person serves in parliament, all that he votes in that public capacity or condition is truly and politically to be esteemed the vote of all those persons, for whom he stands, and serves as representative. Now inasmuch as Adam's sin was free and voluntary, and also imputed to all his posterity; it follows that their original corruption, the direct and proper effect of this sin, must be equally voluntary; and being withal irregular, must needs be sinful. Age and ripeness of years does

not give being, but only opportunity to sin. That principle, which lay dormant and unactive before, is then drawn forth into sinful acts and commissions. When a man is grown up, his corruption does not begin to exist, but to appear; and to spend upon that stock, which it had long before.

Pelagius indeed tells us, that the sons of Adam came to be sinners only by imitation. But then, I would know of him what those first inclinations are, which dispose us to such bad imitations? Certainly, that cannot but be sinful, which so powerfully, and almost forcibly inclines us to sin. We may conclude therefore, that even this original, native corruption renders the persons who have it obnoxious and liable to death. An evil heart will condemn us, though Providence should prevent its running forth into an evil life. Sin is sin, whether it rests in the inclinations, or shoots out into the practice: and a toad is full of poison, though he never spits it.

2. The other branch, or rather sort of sin, is that which we call actual. This is the highest improvement of the former: the constant flux and ebullition of that corrupt fountain in the course of a vicious life; that "abundance of the heart" declared in expressions, and made visible in actions. It is that which St. John calls "the works of the devil," 1 John iii. 8, and the apostle Paul, "the deeds of the flesh," Rom. viii. 13, and "a walking and living after the flesh;" with other such like descriptions.

Now actual sin may be considered two ways: 1. According to the subject-matter of it. 2. According to the degree.

1. For the first; considered according to the subject-matter of it, it is divided into the sin of our words, the sin of our actions, and the sin of our desires; according to that short, but full account given of it by the schools, that it is *dictum, factum, aut concupitum contra legem Dei*; something said, done, or desired, against the rule of God's law.

(1.) And first for the sin of our words; the irregularity of them is no doubt sinful, and imprints a guilt upon the speaker. We cannot say in that lofty strain of those in Psalm xii. 4, "Our tongues are our own: who is lord over us?" No; we have both a lord and a law over us; and our tongues are not so much our own, as to privilege the greatest princes and the most illustrious drolls from being responsible for their extravagance. A word is quickly spoken, but the guilt of it abides: like an arrow, it flies swift, and it sticks fast. And our Saviour assures us, that "every idle word" stands upon record to be one day accounted for. And that word is such, which is either directed to no end, or not to a right one. A defect in either of which leaves an immorality behind it. For, as it is in Matt. xii. 37, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Thy own tongue shall give in

evidence against thee; and thy soul shall pass to hell through thy own mouth.

(2.) The second sort of actual sin is the sin of our **external** actions; that is, of such as are performed, not by immediate production or emanation from the will, but by command of the will upon some exterior part or member of the body, as the proper instrument of action. Such as are the acts of theft, murder, uncleanness, and the like. To prove which to be sins, no more is required, but only to read over the law of God, and to acknowledge its authority. They being written in such big, broad, and legible characters, that the times of the grossest ignorance were never ignorant of the guilt and turpitude inseparably inherent in them. And where the written letter of the law came not, there, according to the apostle's phrase, men, as to these particulars, "were a law to themselves," and by perusing that little book, which every man carried in his own breast, could quickly find enough both to discover and to condemn those enormities.

(3.) The third sort of actual sin, is the sin of our desires. Desires are the first issues and sallings out of the soul to unlawful objects. They are sin, as it were, in its first formation. For as soon as the heart has once conceived this fatal seed, it first quickens and begins to stir in desire: concupiscence is the prime and leading sin, which gives life and influence to all the rest, so that the ground and the principal prohibition of the law is, "Thou shalt not covet." And in Matt. v. we see how severely the gospel arraigns the first movings of every irregular appetite, making them equal to the gross perpetration of the sin. And indeed action is only a consummation of desire; and could we imagine an outward action performable without it, it would be rather the shell and outside of a sin, than properly a sin itself.

Now all these three ways, namely, by word, action, and desire, does sin actually put forth itself. And this is the division of it, as considered according to its subject-matter.

2. The other consideration of actual sin is according to the degree or measure of it; and so also it is distinguished into several degrees and proportions, according to which it is either enhanced or lessened in its malignity.

(1.) As first, when a man is engaged in a sinful course by surprise and infirmity, and the extreme frailty of his corrupt nature; when the customs of the world, and the unruliness of his affections, all conspiring with outward circumstances, do, like a torrent, beat him out of the paths of virtue, and, as it were, whether he will or no, drive and bear him forward in the broad road to perdition: which I take to be frequently the condition of the dangerous, unwary, hardy part of a man's life, his youth; in which generally desire is high, and reason low; temptations ready, and religion afar off. And in such a case, if a strict education, and an early infusion of virtue does not prepossess and season the

heart, and thereby prevent the powers of sin in their first and most furious eruptions; how is a desperate wretch drawn forth into open rebellion against his Maker, into a contempt of all goodness, and a love of those ways that can tend to and end in nothing but his confusion! And yet this is the most tolerable condition that sin designs to bring the sinner into. I call it the most tolerable, because sin, left to its natural course and tendency, would and may plunge him into a much worse. Nevertheless, if a remedy does not maturely interpose, this must certainly prove fatal, and the end and wages of it will be death.

(2.) The second degree of actual sin is, when a man pursues a course of sin against the reluctancies of an awakened conscience, and the endeavours of his conversion: when salvation waits and knocks at the door of his heart, and he both bolts it out and drives it away: when he fights with the word, and struggles with the Spirit; and, as it were, resolves to perish in spite of mercy itself, and of the means of grace. This we may see exemplified by several instances, both in the Old Testament and the New. Thus God upbraids the house of Israel, Isaiah i. 5, "Why should ye be stricken any more, ye will revolt yet more and more?" And is there any thing more frequent, than complaints of their back-sliding, their playing fast and loose with God, and their sinning against all God's methods of reclaiming sinners? Isaiah lvii. 17, "I was wroth," says God, "and smote him: I hid myself, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his own heart." Here we see God angry, and the sinner unconcerned, God smiting, and yet the sinner still proceeding.

And the like examples we find of the Jews sinning in our Saviour's time: they sinned against clear light and irresistible conviction; with a hard heart and a daring hand. "If ye were blind," says our Saviour, John ix. 41, "ye should not have had sin." No, they sinned knowingly and resolutely, with an open eye and a bare face, as if they would even look conscience itself out of countenance. If our Saviour did wonders and miracles before them, they encountered miracle with miracle, and were as miraculous in their obstinacy as he in his mighty works.

Now this is a more robust, improved, and confirmed way of sinning, than any sinner, upon his first entrance into and engagement in the service of sin, ever rises to; and it takes in many grains of guilt and malignity, which were not in the former; it inflames the sinner's reckoning; it alters the nature and changes the colour of his sin, and sets it off with a deeper stamp and a more crimson dye.

(3.) The third and last degree of actual sin is, when a man sins, not only in opposition, but also in defiance to conscience; so breaking all bonds, so trampling upon all convictions, that he becomes not only unruly and untractable, but finally obstinate and incorrigible. And this is the utmost, the *ne plus ultra* of

impiety, which shuts the door of mercy, and seals the decree of damnation. For this we are to reckon upon, that there is a certain pitch of sin, a certain degree of wickedness, though known to God himself alone, beyond which, God never pardons (not that it is in its nature unpardonable, but that God, according to the wise and unsearchable economy of his dealing with sinners, after such a height of provocation, withdraws his grace, and surceases the operations of his Spirit, by which alone the heart can be effectually changed or wrought upon). So that these being thus withdrawn, the sinner never actually repents or returns; but being left to himself, and the uncontrolled sway of his own corruptions, he still goes on sinning, till he ends his wretched course in final impenitence.

And this, no doubt, is the true sense of all those scriptures that represent God limiting his grace to a certain day: the neglect of which, like the last and fatal line drawn under the sinner's accounts, leaves him nothing more to expect, but a dreadful payment; or, as the apostle calls it, "a fearful looking for of judgment." For as soon as ever the sinner has filled the cup of God's wrath, the next infusion makes it run over.

And thus I have shown the several degrees of actual sin, the several steps and descents by which the sinner goes down into the regions of death and the bottomless pit.

Now this differs from original sin thus, that that is properly the seed, this the harvest; that merits, this actually procures death. For although as soon as ever the seed be cast in, there is a design to reap; yet, for the most part, God does not actually put in the sickle, till continuance in sin has made the sinner ripe for destruction.

II. Come we now to the second general thing proposed; which is, to show *what is included and comprised in death, which is here allotted for the sinner's wages?* Death is the great enemy of nature, the devourer of mankind; that which is continually destroying and making havoc of the creation: and we shall see the full latitude of it, if we consider it as it stands divided into temporal and eternal?

1. And first, for death temporal. We must not take it in that restrained sense, as it imports only the separation of the soul from the body: for that is rather the consummation of death, than death itself; it is properly the ending stroke, the last blow given to the falling tree. But we must take it in a larger compass and comprehension; as it is a summary and compendious abridgment of all those evils which afflict human nature; of all those calamities and disasters, which by degrees weaken, and at length dissolve the body.

Look upon those harbingers and forerunners of death, diseases; they are but some of the wages of sin paid us beforehand.

What are pains and aches, and the torments of the gout and of the stone, which lie pulling at our earthly tabernacle, but so many ministers and under-agents of death? What are catarrhs and ulcers, coughs and dropsies, but so many mementos of a hastening dissolution, so many foretastes of the grave? What is a consumption, but a lingering, gradual rotting, before we are laid under ground? What is a burning fever, but hell in a shorter and a weaker fire? And to these diseases of the body, we may add the consuming cares and troubles of the mind; the toil, and labour, and racking intention of the brain; all made necessary by the first sin of man; and which do as really, though not as sensibly impair and exhaust the vitals, as the most visible corporeal diseases do, or can do; and let in death to the body, though by another door.

Moreover, to these miseries, which reach us in our persons, we may subjoin those which attend our condition; those which we are liable to in our names and estates; as the shame and infamy, which makes men a scorn to others, and a burden to themselves; which takes of the gloss and air of all other enjoyments, and damps the quickness, the vigour, and vivacity of the spirit. Also the miseries of poverty and want, which leave the necessities and the conveniencies, that is to say, the second necessities of nature unsupplied: when a man shall be forced to make his meals upon hunger and expectation; to be clothed with rags, and to converse with filth; and to live only upon those alms which the covetousness or the surfeit of other men can spare.

Now all these things are so many breaches made upon our happiness and well-being, without which life is not life, but a bare, thin, insipid existence; and therefore certainly we cannot deny them to be parts of death, unless perhaps from this reason, that upon a true estimate of things, they are indeed much worse.

And thus we have seen death in the first fruits of it; how by degrees it creeps upon us, how many engines it plants against us, how many assaults it gives, till at length it ends its fatal progress in the final divorce which it makes between soul and body, never resting, till it has abased us to our primitive earth, and to the dishonours of stench, rottenness, and putrefaction.

2. But secondly, the grand payment of the sinner's wages is in death eternal: in comparison of which, the other can scarce be called death; but only a transient change, a short darkness upon nature; easily borne, or at least quickly past. But when eternity comes into the balance, it adds an infinity to the weight, and sinks it down to an immense disparity. Eternal death is not only the sinner's punishment, but his amazement: no thought, no created reason can take the length of an endless duration.

But there are also some other concomitant properties of this death, which vastly increase and aggravate the horror of it, besides the bare considerations of its eternity.

(1.) As first, that it bereaves a man of all the pleasures and comforts which he enjoyed in this world; the loss of which, how poor and contemptible soever they are in themselves, yet surely must needs be very afflictive to him who had placed his whole entire happiness in them; and therefore to be stripped of all these, and to be cast naked and forlorn into utter darkness and desertion, cannot but be infinitely tormenting, though a man should meet with no other tormentors in that place. For to have strong, eager, immense desires, and a perpetual bar and divorce put between them and their beloved objects, will of itself be hell enough, though the worm should die, and the fire should be quenched.

For how will the drunkard, the epicure, and the wanton bear the absence and removal of those things that alone used to please their fancy and to gratify their lust! For here will be neither ball nor masks, plays nor mistresses, for the gallant to entertain himself with; here will be company indeed good store, but no good-fellowship; roaring enough, but no ranting in this place. With what a killing regret must the condemned worldling look back upon his rich manors and his large estate, his parks and his pleasant gardens! to which there is now no return for him, but only by thought and remembrance; which can serve him for nothing, but to heighten his anguish by a bitter comparison of his past and present condition. And this is some of the fruit of sin, which, by carrying out the heart to a vicious, irregular enjoyment of the things of this life, which quickly have an end, treasures up in the same heart materials for such a sorrow as shall have none.

(2.) Eternal death bereaves the soul of that infinite, inexpressible good, the beatific fruition of God. The greatest and the quickest misery of a condemned sinner is the sense of loss. And if the loss of those puny temporal enjoyments makes so great a part of his punishment, as I have shown it does, what then shall we say of the loss of that, which was the only thing which gave life and spirit to all those enjoyments! which gave them that substance and suitableness to our nature, as to render them properly felicities! For all the comfort that God conveys to the creature, comes from the sensible, refreshing discoveries of his presence. "In thy presence," says the psalmist, "there is fullness of joy," Psalm xvi. 11. This is the reviving light, which scatters all the darknesses and dismal blacks of sorrow; that wipes off all tears: the happy sunshine which dries up those disconsolate dews. For as it is the presence of the king which makes the court; so it is the peculiar presence of God which makes heaven; which is not so much the name of a place, as of a state or condition.

But now, there is an everlasting cloud drawn between this and a sinner under damnation. God hides himself for ever; so



that this is the sum and height of the sinner's doom, that he is condemned eternally to feel God's hand, and never to see his face.

(3.) And lastly, eternal death fills both body and soul with most intense pain, and the highest torment and anguish which can be received within a created, finite capacity. All the woes, griefs, and terrors which humanity can labour under, shall then, as it were, unite, and really seize upon the soul at once. "I am tormented in this flame," says the rich man, Luke xvi. 24. And surely a bed of flames is but an uneasy thing for a man to roll himself upon to all eternity. The sufferings which shall attend this estate, no tongue can express, no heart can conceive. Pain shall possess the body; horror, agony, and despair shall rack the mind: so that the whole man shall be made the receptacle and scene of misery, the tragical scene for vengeance to act its utmost upon, and to show how far a creature is capable of being tormented, without the loss of its being; the continuance of which, under those circumstances, is but a miserable privilege, and would gladly be exchanged for annihilation. For every lash which God then gives the sinner shall be with a scorpion; every pain which he inflicts shall be more eager than appetite, more cruel than revenge; every faculty, both of soul and body, shall have its distinct, proper, and peculiar torment applied to it, and be directly struck there, where it has the quickest, the tenderest, and the sharpest sense of any painful impression.

God seldom punishes or afflicts in this world, but it is with some alloy of mercy; some mixture of clemency, which even in the midst of misery may yet support hope. But when sin has lodged the sinner in hell, the cup which God then administers shall be all justice without mercy, all wrath and venom, all dregs and yet no bottom; a cup never to be drank off, inexhaustibly full, inconceivably bitter. But I shall use no other argument to evince the greatness of those torments but only this, that the devil shall be the instrument of their execution. And surely a mortal enemy will be a dreadful executioner: and the punishment which an infinite justice inflicts by the hand of an implacable malice must needs be intolerable.

And thus I have despatched the second general thing proposed; which was to show what is included and comprised in death, which is here allotted for the sinner's wages. I proceed now to the

III. And last; which is to show *in what respect death is properly called "the wages of sin."* I conceive it may be upon these two following accounts.

1. Because the payment of wages still presupposes service and labour. And undoubtedly the service of sin is of all others the most painful and laborious. It will engross all a man's industry

drink up all his time; it is a drudgery without intermission, a business without vacation.

We read of "the mystery of iniquity:" and certainly the mystery of no trade can be attained without a long and a constant sedulity. *Nemo repenti fit turpissimus*. It is the business of a life to be a complete sinner.

Such as are the commands of sin, such must be also the service. But the commands of sin are for their number continual, for their vehemence importunate, and for their burden tyrannical.

Sin is said to conceive, and to bring forth; and there is no birth without pain and travail. God condemned Adam upon his transgression to the turmoils of sweat and labour: but one would have thought that he might have spared this malediction, when labour is not only the consequent, but the very nature of sin. To dig the earth is man's punishment; but the sin which deserves it is the greater labour. For is there any work so toilsome, so full of fatigue and weariness, as to be always at the call of an unlimited appetite, at the command of an insatiable corruption? The Greek is emphatical, and describes the nature of sin in its name; for *πονηρία*, which signifies *sin* or *wickedness*, takes its derivation from *πόνος*, which signifies *labour*. So that the readiest way, it seems, to fulfil the apostle's precept in 1 Thess. iv. 11, of "studying to be quiet," is to study to be innocent.

And were there nothing else in sin but the discomposing and ruffling of that serene, quiet, and undisturbed frame of spirit, which naturally attends a true and steady virtue, it were enough to endear the one, and to discommend the other. For sin seldom acts, but in the strength of some passion; and passion never moves but with tumult and agitation: there being scarce any passion but has its contrary to thwart and to encounter it; so that still the actings of them represent a kind of little war in the soul: and accordingly, as the prophet Isaiah says of every battle of the warrior, so we may say of every stirring of a high passion, that it is "with confused noise." The still voice of reason is drowned, the sober counsels of religion are stifled, and not heard. And must not that man, think we, needs be very miserable, who has always such a din and hurry in his breast? His passions raging, and his vicious appetites haling and pulling him, sometimes to this object, sometimes to a contrary! So that what through the clamour, and what through the convulsion of exorbitant clashing desires, the soul is in a rent, distracted condition; like Actæon amongst his dogs, that first bawl about his ears, and then tear him to pieces.

The truth of this is sufficiently manifest, from the general theory of the thing itself; but the same will appear yet more evidently by running over particular instances.

And first, take the voluptuous, debauched epicure. What hour of his life is vacant from the slavish injunction of his vice?

Is he not continually spending both his time and his subsistence, to gratify his taste? and, as it were, to draw all the elements to his table, to make a sacrifice to the deity of his belly? And then, how uneasy are the consequences of his luxury! when he is to grapple with surfeit and indigestion, with his morning fumes and crudities, and other low and ignoble distempers, the effects of a brutish eating? thus having his stomach always like a kitchen, both for fulness and for filth.

And next, for the intemperate drinker; is not his life a continual toil? To be sitting up when others sleep, and to go to bed when others rise; to be exposed to drunken quarrels, and to sordid converse; to have redness of eyes, rheums, and distillations; a weakened body and a besotted mind?

And then for the adulterer and unclean person; upon what hard employments does his lust put him! first to contrive, plot, and compass its satisfaction, and then to avoid the furies of an enraged jealousy, and to keep off the shame of an infamous discovery? We find the adulterer in Job xxiv. 16, "digging through houses," till at length, perhaps, he digs his own grave too; and by a laborious pursuit, comes to an ignominious end.

And lastly, for the covetous, scraping usurer: it is a question whether he gathers or keeps his pelf with most anxiety; he is restless to get, and fearful to lose, but always solicitous, and at work. And perhaps those who labour in the mines are not so busy as those who own them. But I need say no more of such a person but this, that his business is as vast and endless as his desires; and greater it cannot be.

And thus I have shown the toil of sin, in several particulars, to which many more might be added. In short, if idleness were not a sin, there was scarce any sin but what is laborious.

So that now the retribution of death following such hard and painful service, may properly bear the denomination of wages; and be reputed rather a payment than a punishment.

2. The other reason, why death is called "the wages of sin," is, because wages do always imply a merit in the work, requiring such a compensation. Sin and death are compared together as sowing and reaping: and we all account it a thing of the highest reason and equity in the world, that he who sows should also reap: "He who sows to the flesh," says the apostle, Gal. vi. 8, "shall of the flesh reap corruption." The evil of sin is every way commensurate to the evil of death; retaliation is the very nature and spirit of justice; and that a man, who does an action contrary to another's good, should be made to expiate it by a suffering contrary to his own, is but proportion.

But to this some make that trite and popular objection; that since the same is the measure and extent of things contrary; and since our good works cannot merit eternal life; it should follow also, that neither can our sins, our evil works, merit eternal death.

But to this I answer, that the case is very different in these two. For to the nature of merit, it is required that the action be not due: but now every good action being enjoined and commanded by the law of God, is thereby made due, and consequently cannot merit: whereas, on the contrary, a sinful action being *quid indebitum*, altogether undue, and not at all commanded, but prohibited, it becomes properly meritorious; and, according to the malignity of its nature, it merits eternal death.

But some will yet further urge, that in regard a sinful action is in itself but of a finite nature, and withal proceeds from a finite agent; there seems to be nothing of proportion between that, and an endless, eternal punishment. For what is man but a weak, mutable creature at the best? And what is sin, but a vanishing action, which is performed in the compass of a few minutes, and not to be laid in the scale with the inexhaustible measures of perpetuity?

But to this also we answer, that the merit of sin is not to be rated, either by the substance of the act, or by the narrowness and poorness of the agent; but it is to be measured by the proportions of its object, and the greatness of the person against whom it is done. And therefore being committed against an infinite majesty, it greatens, and rises to the height of an infinite demerit. Nevertheless, because men are apt to think that God treats them upon hard terms, and to view sin with a more favourable eye; I shall in a word or two shew what there is in the nature of sin, which renders it so highly provoking, as to deserve the greatest evil that omnipotence itself can inflict upon the creature. And,

1st. Sin is a direct stroke at God's sovereignty. Hence we read of the kingdom of Satan, in contradistinction to the kingdom of God: and in the conversion of a sinner, when grace is wrought in the heart, the kingdom of God is said to come into it: and the whole economy of the gospel is styled "the kingdom of heaven." So that sin had translated God's subjects into a new dominion: as amongst men, he who has committed a felony or a murder, usually flies the territories of his lawful prince; and so living in another kingdom, puts himself under the necessity of a new subjection. Thus sin invades the throne of God, usurps his royalty, and snatches at his sceptre. But now there is nothing so tender, and sensibly jealous of the least encroachment, as prerogative; the throne admits of no partner, endures no competitor. Rule and enjoy all Egypt, says Pharaoh to Joseph, but still with this reserve, that "in the throne I will be greater than thou." No wonder therefore if God punishes sin, which is indeed treason against the king of kings, with death; for it puts the question "Who shall reign?" It grasps at all, it strikes high, and is properly a blow given to the supremacy.

2dly. Sin strikes at God's very being. In Psalm xiv. 1, "The

fool," that is, the sinner, "has said in his heart, There is no God;" and if this be his belief, it is so because it was first his desire. Sin would step not only into God's throne, but also into his room. And it matters not, that the infinite perfection of God sets him far above the boldest reaches of his rebel-creature. For it is enough to see the attempts of malice: God takes an estimate of the sinner by his will; he is as much a serpent now he hisses, as if he stung: for whatsoever a man has a heart to wish, if he had power, he would certainly effect.

And now, if all this malignity lies wrapped up in the bowels of sin, let none wonder how it comes to deserve death; but admire rather that God has not invented something greater than death (if possible) to revenge the provocation.

And thus I have finished the third and last general thing proposed to be handled from the words: from which, and all the foregoing particulars, what can we so naturally and so directly infer and learn, as the infinite, incredible folly, which acts and possesses the heart of man in all its purposes to sin! still proposing to the sinner nothing but pleasure and enjoyment, advantage and emolument, from the commission of that which will infallibly subject him to all the miseries and killing sorrows that humanity is capable of. Sin plays the bait before him, the bait of a little, contemptible, silly pleasure or profit; but it hides from his view that fatal hook, which shall strike through his heart and liver, and by which that great catcher and devourer of souls shall hold him fast, and drag him down to his eternal execution. The consequent appendant miseries of sin are studiously kept from the sinner's notice; his eye must not see what his heart will certainly rue; but he goes on pleasantly and unconcernedly, and acts a more cruel, inhuman butchery upon his own soul, that ever any self-murderer did upon his own body.

I shall close up all with that excellent saying of the wisest of men, in Prov. xiv. 9, that "fools make a mock at sin." Fools they are indeed, for doing so. But is it possible, for any thing that wears the name of reason, to be so much a fool, as to make a mock at death too? Will a man play with hell, dally with a scorpion, and sport himself with everlasting burnings?

In every sin which a man deliberately commits, he takes down a draught of deadly poison. In every lust which he cherishes, he embraces a dagger, and opens his bosom to destruction.

In fine, I have endeavoured to show what sin is, and what death is, the certain inevitable wages of sin; and so, have only this short advice to add, and to conclude with: he who likes the wages, let him go about the work.

## SERMON XXII.

HEAVEN PROMISED TO THE PURE IN HEART.

MATTHEW v. 8.

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

IT may at first seem something wonderful, especially since the times of the gospel, that there should be so few men in the world happy, when happiness is so freely offered, and proposed by God, and withal so universally and eagerly desired by men. But the obviousness of the reason will quickly supersede the wonder; if we consider the perverse and preposterous way of men's acting: who, at the same time, passionately pursue the end, and yet overlook the means; catch at the good proposed, but abhor the condition of the proposal. For all would enjoy the felicity of seeing God, but scarce any can brook so severe a duty as to maintain a pure heart; all would behold so entertaining and glorious a sight, but few are willing to crowd for it into the narrow way. Men would reconcile their future happiness with their present ease, pass to glory without submitting to the methods of grace. So that the grand reason that so many go to hell, is because they would go to heaven for nothing: the truth is, they would not go, but be caught up to heaven; they would (if I may use the expression) coach it to the other world, as Elias did; but to live as the same Elias did in this world, that they cannot bear. In fine, if we could peruse the black roll of all those who have perished eternally, we should find that the generality of men are lost, because they cannot eat, drink, sleep, and play themselves into salvation.

But this great sermon of our Saviour teaches us much other things; a sermon fraught with the most refined and elevated doctrine, the most sublime and absolute morality that ever was vented into the world; far before all the precepts and most applauded doctrine of the philosophers; yea, as far before them in perfection and purity, as they were before Christianity in time. For they only played upon the surface and outside of virtue, gilding the actions, and giving some little varnish to the external behaviour of men: but Christianity looks through all this, searches the reins, and pierces into the inmost recesses of the soul, never resting till it stabs sin, and places virtue in the very heart. An eminent instance of which we have in these words; which being so very plain and easy in themselves ought not

to be encumbered with any superfluous explication: and therefore I shall pass immediately to the discussion of them; which I shall manage under these four following heads. As,

I. I shall show what it is to be "pure in heart."

II. What it is to "see God."

III. How this purity of heart fits and qualifies the soul for the sight or vision of God.

IV. And lastly, make some brief use and application of the whole.

I. And for the first of these, we must know that the nature of purity in general cannot be better explained, than by its opposition to these two things: 1. To mixture. 2. To pollution.

1. And first of all, it excludes mixture: that is to say, all conjunction with any different or inferior nature; purity still infers simplicity: gold cannot be called pure, though never so great in bulk, if it has but the least alloy of a baser metal. Though there be in the heart seeds of virtue, principles of goodness and morality; yet if blended with a greater or an equal degree of corruption, that heart cannot challenge the denomination of *pure*: for, as Solomon says, Eccles. x. 1, even so small a thing as "a fly falling into the apothecary's ointment, will give it an offensive savour; and one grain of folly will taint all the honour of him who has a reputation for wisdom." In this sense also is purity ascribed to the word or law of God in Psalm cxix. 140, "Thy word is pure, therefore thy servant loveth it:" which is an elogy that cannot be truly given to any other laws in the world, no, not to those of the most renowned lawgivers, as of Lycurgus, Solon, or Plato in his commonwealth, whose laws, though they enjoined many worthy, virtuous, and noble actions, yet still were debased by the addition of something vile and filthy, not only allowed, but sometimes also commended by them; still there was a vein of immorality running through them, that corrupted and defiled the whole channel, and the best of human laws have still some mixture of imperfection.

But now all mixture or composition is a kind of confusion: attempting unity, where nature has made variety and distinction. It raises a certain war or faction in the same compound; and the very cause of death, dissolution, and putrefaction in all sublunary bodies, is from the contest and clashing of contrary qualities upon mixture; which never takes away the innate enmity of contraries, though it may compose their present quarrel. Christ states this matter fully in Matt. vi. 24, "No man," says he, "can serve two masters; for he will love the one, and hate the other." In like manner, it is impossible for two opposite principles so to unite and mix themselves in the same heart, as equally to command and share its obedience by such just proportions, that it should at the same time seriously intend the service of virtue and the gratifi-

cation of a vice. Now to give things their due and exact appellations, I conceive, in the sense hitherto spoken of, a pure heart is properly the same with that which is called in scripture a "single heart."

2. Purity excludes also pollution, that is, all adherence of filth and outward contagion; as a fountain is said to be pure, when there is no dirt or soil cast into it, that may discolour or defile it. If the guilt of any gross sinful act cleaves to the conscience, that conscience presently loses its purity and virginity. Every such sin falls upon it like a blot of ink upon the finest linen or the cleanest paper. In this sense St. Paul enjoins purity to Timothy, 1 Tim. v. 22, "Keep thyself pure," that is, free from the least taint of vice or scandal. In this sense also St. Paul declares himself in Acts xx. 26, "pure from the blood of all men;" that is, clear from the guilt or charge of the murderous neglect of souls. So that a pure heart thus taken, is properly the same with that which David calls a "clean heart," Psalm li. 10, "Create in me, O God, a clean heart." For so much of inherent sin, so much of filth and foulness. The very frame and make of man's heart is but dust; but sin degrades it still lower, and turns it into dirt.

Having thus shown what purity is in the general notion of it, I shall now endeavour to show wherein the purity of the heart consists. And that,

1. By way of negation. It does not consist in the external exercise of religion; the heart does not always write itself upon the outward actions. These may shine and glister, while that in the mean time may be noisome and impure. In a pool you may see the uppermost water clear, but if you cast your eye to the bottom, you shall see that to be dirt and mud. To rate a man's internals by his externals, and what works in his breast by what appears in his face, is a rule very fallible. For we often see specious practices spread over vile and base principles: as a rotten, unwholesome body may be clothed and covered with the finest silks. There is often a *μέγα χάσμα*, many leagues distance between a man's behaviour and his heart. In Isaiah xxix. 13, we have some "drawing near to God with their mouth, and honouring him with their lips," of whom it is said in the very next words, that "their heart was far from him." Lip-devotion signifies but little. Judas could afford our Saviour the lip, while he was actually betraying him to his mortal enemies. It is in this case with the soul as with the body, the inward vital state of it is not always known by the colour or complexion. For, I suppose, we are not now to learn that the grand governing principle of the world is hypocrisy. And while it is so in judging of men's words and actions, it is but too often necessary to read them backwards. For though, naturally indeed, they are signs, and signs of the thoughts and affections of the mind; yet art may, and usually



does make them much otherwise. And it is odds, but he mistakes seldome, who judges of men quite contrary to what they appear: so seldom do the inward and the outward man correspond with one another. And if this were not so, the prerogative of divine knowledge in judging of a man's internals would not be much superior to the sagacity of a human inspection. For that can read all that is legible to the eye, all that can incur into the outward senses.

But still we must observe, that this assertion of not judging by the outward actions, is to be understood only of good actions, not of bad. For although an act materially and outwardly good may proceed from a heart which is stark naught; yet where the outward actions are bad, it is certain that the heart cannot be good. For the matter of the action, which is properly that which comes into the outward view, may be good, and yet the action itself, upon other accounts, be absolutely evil: but if the matter of the action be evil (since evil is from any defect), the whole action must be so too. And consequently, since "a good tree cannot produce evil fruit," it is manifest that the heart which produces and presides over those actions, is and must be evil.

But to return to what we were before about: that the outward piety of a man's behaviour cannot certainly argue a pious and a pure heart, is evident, because there may be assigned several other principles, short of real piety, and yet sufficient to produce such a behaviour. As,

(1.) A virtuous and strict education. Many are born into the world, not only with the general taint of original sin, but also with such particular propensions, such predominant inclinations to vice, that they are as fruitful a soil for the devil to plant in, and afford as much fuel for sin to flame out upon, as it is possible for the utmost corruption of human nature to supply them with. But God, who in his most wise providence restrains many whom he never renews, has many ways to prevent the outrageous eruption of this vicious principle. And one great one is this of a pious education; which may lay such strong fetters, such powerful restrictions upon the heart, that it shall not be able to lash out into those excesses and enormities, which the more licentious and debauched part of the world wallow in! yet still, though by this the unclean bird be caged up, the uncleanness of its nature is not hereby changed. For as no raking or harrowing can alter the nature of a barren ground, though it may smooth and level it to the eye; so neither can those early disciplines of parents and tutors extirpate the innate appetites of the soul, and turn a bad heart into a good: they may indeed draw some plausible lines of civility upon the outward carriage and conversation, but to conquer a natural inclination is the work of a higher power. Nevertheless it must be always looked upon as a high mercy,

where God is pleased to do so much for a man as this comes to; and whosoever he is, who in his minority has been kept from those extravagances which his depraved nature would otherwise have carried him out to, and so has grown up under the eye of a careful and severe tuition, has cause with bended knees to acknowledge the mercy of being born of religious parents, and bred up under virtuous and discreet governors; and to bless God without any danger of pharisaical arrogance, that upon this account "he is not as many other men are." But still, as I have noted, all this is but the sweeping and garnishing of the house; and though education may sometimes do that, yet it is grace only that can keep out the unclean spirit. And consequently such a person, notwithstanding all this outward flourish of behaviour, must yet know that his heart may be all this while as really un-renewed, and upon that score as impure, as the heart of those who, not being hampered with such early preventions, break forth into the most open and flagitious practices.

(2.) The circumstances and occasions of a man's life may be such as shall constrain him to appear in an outwardly pious dress. As when a man's dependence is upon persons virtuous and religious; and the whole scene of his life cast under those eyes that shall both observe and hate his impiety, there it is not for his interest to uncase and discover himself, and to follow the lure and dictates of a voluptuous humour. While Judas was to associate himself with Christ and his disciples, it concerned him, though he was really a devil, yet to personate and act the saint.

Moreover, when Providence has put a man into a low, a mean, or an afflicted condition, the supplies and opportunities of many vices are thereby cut off, and the man is not able to show himself, or to draw forth those base qualities which he lurking in his breast. He neither drinks, nor whores, nor goes to plays; but he may thank his purse, not his heart for it. Want and poverty bind him to his good behaviour: and Providence thinks fit, in kindness to the world, to chain up the fury and violence of his passions by the straitness of his fortunes. For such is the boundless pride and insolence of some natures, that should they meet with estates equal to the grasp of their desires, and have the plenties of the world flow in with the full swing and career of their appetites, they would be intolerable. Society would even groan under them, and neither heaven nor earth would endure them; so that there is a necessity, that penury and scarcity should discipline, and, as it were, diet them into sober courses. But still, amidst all these restraints, the mind of such a one may be as base, as filthy, and as prone to all lewdness, as the mind of a thorough-paced rebel may be to his old game, after an act of oblivion. For by all this, Providence only ties his hands, grace does not change his heart.

(3.) The care and tenderness a man has of his honour, may

engage him to demean himself with some show of piety and religion. For there is scarce any one so vicious (some few monsters, some years since amongst us, excepted) as to desire or judge it for their credit to be thought so. But generally, as every such person would gladly "die the death of the righteous," so he would willingly live with the credit and reputation of the righteous too. The principle of honour (even with persons not styled honourable) will go a great way; and a man will be at the cost of a few seemingly virtuous actions to be reputed a virtuous person. Men use to go to church in their best clothes, and it is for their credit to put on the fairest appearance in a religious performance. We read how far this principle carried the pharisees; and what a glorious outside the love of glory put upon them. They prayed, they fasted, they gave alms, and in short, had the very art of mortification; and yet within were full of all fraud, extortion, and excess, and, in a word, of themselves. There were none, whose behaviour shined brighter in the eyes of men, nor whose heart was more loathsome in the eyes of God; for they did all to be seen and talked of; and, as it were, to ride in triumph upon the tongues of men; and in fine, were the arrantest puritans in the world, those only of a later date excepted, who it is confessed have infinitely outdone their original. For all the religion of those pharisees flowed only from the beholder's eye, and not from their own heart. They "made broad their phylacteries, and enlarged the borders of their garments," taking the measure of both by the breadth and largeness of their latitudinarian consciences: which were of such ample and capacious dimensions, that after they had breathed themselves into a stomach by a long prayer, they could easily swallow a thousand widows' estates, lands, tenements, and all, for the first course, and the revenues of a crown and church for the second, of which we can bring a *probatum est* for a demonstration.

Machiavel himself, though no great friend to religion, yet affirms, and very frequently too, that the appearance and reputation of religion is advantageous; and that, we know, is not to be acquired without many instances of practice, which may affect and dazzle the spectators into admiration, and then make them vent that admiration in applause. But what is all this to the purity of the heart, to the sanctity of the inner man? It is all but the acting of a part, a piece of pageantry, a mere contrivance of ambition, nothing but dress and disguise, and may possibly procure a man some glory in this world, but none in the next.

Now in all these motives to a religious behaviour, we may observe this of them, that they are forced and preternatural; and raise a motion which they are not able to keep up. As when we see a stone thrown upwards, it moves only from the impression of an outward force, and not from the activity of an inward principle; and therefore it quickly sinks, and falls to the ground.

In like manner, when there is not a stock or habit of purity in the heart, constantly and uniformly to diffuse the same into the outward actions, the appearance of piety will be found too thin and weak to support itself long. And let that man, whosoever he is, who acts in the ways of piety and virtue only upon the force and spring of external inducements, be warily observed and attended to, and it is a thousand to one but that some time or other his vice gives his hypocrisy the slip, and lays him open to the world, and convinces all about him, that how fair and specious soever the structure seemed to be which he had raised, yet the foundation of it was laid in the sand, or, which is worse, in the mud.

From all which I conclude, that purity of heart neither consists in, nor can certainly be proved by any external religious performances whatsoever.

2. In the second place, therefore, to show positively wherein it does consist: it consists properly in an inward change and renovation of the heart, by the infusion of such a principle into it, as naturally suits and complies with whatsoever is pure, holy, and commanded by God. It is not a thing born, or brought into the world with us, nor yet reared upon the stock of nature by any art, industry, or cultivation of our own whatsoever. No, it is and must be the product of a new creation. Nor can all our sorrows and tears of themselves wash or purify the heart; but the Spirit of God must move upon the face of those waters, and form in it the new creature, or the heart will continue in its native filth, chaos, and confusion for ever. Now where such a principle of purity is, it will be like a strong bias, continually inclining and carrying out the soul, and that even in its most vigorous appetites, to what is pure. For as we rationally gather and learn the nature of a thing, from the quality of those things which agree or disagree with it; so when the heart kindly and naturally closes with the purity and excellency of the divine precepts, but on the other side carries a certain aversion to, and loathing of the sordid, unclean suggestions of sin, it is an argument that it is advanced into new principles and inclinations, and purified from those foul habits, which it was originally polluted with.

Now there are three things more especially (amongst many others that might be mentioned) in which this purity of the heart does certainly and infallibly manifest itself. As,

(1.) In the purity and untainted sanctity of the thoughts. The range of the thoughts is free, and may defy the inspection of the most curious and inquisitive mortal beholder: they walk in such a retirement, as is open to no eye, but to that alone, to which nothing can be hid. Now when a man shall carry so strict a hand over these, as to admit of no parley with vice, no, not in his thoughts; when yet he knows, that if he should be never so free

and familiar with it there, no man breathing could either observe or reproach him for it: this surely argues, that he loves virtue for itself, and that purity, instead of being his design, is become his nature. For what Solomon says of the dissembling churl in Prov. xxiii. 7, "that as he thinketh in his heart, even so is he;" the same may be said of every man living, in respect of that principle which sways and governs his mind, be it what it will.

For since the thoughts are so quick as to prevent all deliberation, and withal so unruly, as for the most part to admit of no control from reason, when it would either command or carry them out to, or remand, and take them off from any object; it follows, that whatsoever they run out freely and spontaneously upon, that the mind is full of, taken up and possessed with, so that it is, as it were, a mighty spring, incessantly and powerfully possessing and bending the thoughts that way. And therefore let a man's outward actions seem never so pure, never so unblameable; yet if the constant or main stream of his thoughts runs impure, if they take a liberty to rove over and delight in filthy, unclean objects; and if where the practice of villany is restrained, it is yet supplied by an active imagination; there a man may be said to be more cautious and reserved indeed, but not at all the more holy. For it is an undoubted argument, that his heart is of the same temper: since wheresoever the main haunt of the thoughts is, there must the heart be also.

(2.) The purity of the heart is infallibly seen in a sanctified regulation of the desires. The first step and advance of the soul is into thought, the second into desire. Now the desires have the same privilege of secrecy and freedom with the thoughts; and if you would collect and argue the nature of the mind from either of them, the argument from these is as evident, and perhaps more forcible, than from the other. For the will is the great scene and subject of vice and virtue: and the desires are the immediate issues of that. No outward force or art whatsoever can stop the vent and passage of desire: but the whole soul flows forth in its inclinations; and therefore, wheresoever they may be discerned, they are the most true, proper, and unfailing interpreters of the heart. For what else means the Spirit of God by that noted expression in Prov. xxiii. 26, "My son, give me thy heart;" but that a man should give God the strongest and most forcible operations, and (as I may so express it) the first-born of his heart, his desires.

There was nothing from which David gathered the sincerity and goodness of his heart so much as from the free and natural flow of his desires; in Psalm cxix. 20, "My soul," says he, "breaketh for the longing desire that it hath to thy judgments at all times." And in Psalm lxxiii. 25, "There is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee." Also in Isaiah xxvi. 9, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night-season" says

the holy prophet. And again in Psalm xxxviii. 9, David sums up his final appeal to God, concerning the integrity of his heart, in these words, "Lord, all my desire is before thee."

So that if any man now would certainly know whether his heart be pure, he has here a compendious and sure way of trial: let him read over his desires, and strictly observe the motions of his will and affections. When he is upon the performance of any holy duty, let him see whether or no his desires keep him company in it; when the allurements of any sinful pleasure or profit plays itself before him, let him see whether his desires do not reach out after it, though perhaps his hand dares not. And this will give him faithful information, and such as will never deceive him; for desire is properly the pulse of the inner man, and as the heart is affected, so that beats.

(3.) The third, and that not the least argument of a pure heart is a fearful and solicitous avoiding of every thing that may tend to sully or defile it. It perfectly hates sin, and therefore dreads the occasions of it: it makes a man know no other way of "working out his salvation," but "with fear and trembling." And in this great work, the trembling hand is still the steadiest, and the fearful heart the most likely to be victorious. For we must know, that there is nothing almost which we meet with, nothing which comes before us, but may be to us an occasion of sin: some things, indeed, are so directly, and others are so by accident. And therefore, whosoever he is, who would be wise unto salvation, must absolutely fly from the former, and warily observe himself in the use of the latter. For as the apostle says, that "the wisdom from above is first pure;" so we may, with equal truth, affirm convertibly, that the purity which is from above is first wise; that is to say, it considers and casts about for the best methods, how to guard and secure itself against the assaults and stratagems of the grand enemy, who would destroy it. And for this cause, be a thing or practice never so lawful in itself, yet if, either through human frailty or the devil's subtlety, it is like to prove a snare to a man, and to engage him in some course or other which is not lawful; a principle of true genuine purity will be sure to keep aloof off from it; and by no means admit the enemy into the outworks, where it is careful to defend the main fort. A man of a heart so disposed, will say within himself, "I will not venture into such a company, I will not use such a recreation, I will not go to this ball nor to that play, for I know not how my mind may serve me under such circumstances; God may leave me to myself, and my strength may fail me, and my own heart betray me. If I tempt God, God may commission the devil to tempt me, and so the serpent slide into my bosom before I am aware." No, such a one will carefully avoid those spiritual pest-houses, where scarce any thing is to be heard or seen, but what tends to the corruption of good manners; and

from whence not one in a thousand returns, but infected with the love of vice, or at least with the hatred of it very much abated from what it was before. And that, I assure you, is no inconsiderable point gained by the tempter; as those who have any experience of their own hearts sufficiently know. He who has no mind to trade with the devil, should be so wise as to keep away from his shop. --

In vain, therefore, does any one pretend to a pure heart, who puts himself into the tempter's walk, into the very road and highway to sin and debauchery. For can any one really hate to be defiled, and yet handle and embrace pitch? abhor all impurity, and yet plant himself in the very neighbourhood and confines of it? A pure heart is a tender heart, and such a one as will smite the breast that holds it, upon sight of "the very garment that is spotted with the flesh;" such a one as feels the least breath that may blow upon its innocence, and, in a word, dreads the very first approaches and remote dangers of that fatal contagion.

And thus much for the first general thing proposed; which was to show, what this purity of the heart is, and wherein it does consist. I proceed now to

II. The second, which is to explain what it is to see God. The enjoyment which blessed spirits have of God in the other world is, both in the language of scripture and of the schools, generally expressed to us by their "seeing God;" as in Matt. xviii. 10, it is said of the angels, that "they always behold the face of God in heaven." And in 1 Cor. xiii. 12 it is said, that hereafter "we shall see God face to face;" with several other places to the same purpose.

Now, concerning a man's thus seeing God, the schools raise several disputes, but the most considerable of them may come under these two heads.

1. In regard every man shall be raised with a body as well as a soul, they question, whether this vision shall be wholly mental, and transacted within the soul, or whether the body shall be refined and sublimated to such a perfection, and nearness to the spiritual nature, as to be also made a sharer in it? And whether it be possible for a corporeal substance to see an incorporeal? To which, those who had rather be wise unto sobriety, than pronounce boldly of such things as their present condition renders them incapable of judging of certainly, give these answers: (1.) That the knowledge of this is mere curiosity, and consequently such as a man may be without, and yet know never the less of what he is really concerned to know. (2.) That there is no express scripture to decide it either way; and natural philosophy is an incompetent judge in matters which can be known only by revelation. But,

2. In the next place, they put the question, whether the soul shall enjoy God, its chief good, by an act of the understanding in its intuition of him, or by an act of the will in its adhesion to him. And there are those who fiercely dispute it on both sides.

But to this also it may be answered, that as the soul shall enjoy a perfect good, so it must enjoy it after a perfect manner; so as to diffuse the enjoyment into every faculty that is capable of it: that is to say, it must enjoy it agreeably to a rational nature; which first receives a good by the apprehensions of the intellect, and then transmits it to the adhesion and embraces of the will. For a rational soul cannot love any good heartily, but it must first understand it; nor can it understand an excellent good thoroughly, but it must also love it. And consequently, I conclude, that the soul's fruition of God is neither precisely by an act of the understanding, nor yet of the will, but jointly and adequately of both. But I shall not run out any further into these controversies, as bearing no such necessary relation to the matter before us.

Briefly therefore, by our "seeing God" is meant, and under it comprised, the whole enjoyment of the felicities of the other life; as by "seeing the sun," is set forth the entire, total enjoyment of this life; as in Eccles. vii. 11, "By wisdom," says the preacher, "there is profit to those who see the sun;" that is, to those who are alive in the world. The Greeks also use the same phrase, *ιδεῖν φῶς ἐν τῷ αἵματι* being frequently used by Homer for the whole enjoyment of this life; and the Latins have the like expression, *luce privari*, "to be deprived of the light," being with them a usual phrase for a man's losing his life.

Now our enjoyment of God is expressed to us by our seeing him, rather than by any other way, I conceive, for these reasons.

(1.) Because the sense of seeing represents the object with greater clearness and evidence, than any of the other senses. Light, the great discoverer both of itself and of all things else, is apprehended only by seeing; and the eye-witness, we know, is still the most authentic. God will then show himself to the soul so plainly and manifestly; he will so open and display his divine perfections to the understanding, that we shall know him as fully and clearly, as we do now those things which we actually see before our eyes; though still, as we must all along suppose, after much another way.

(2.) A second reason is, because the sense of seeing is of all the other senses the most universally exercised and employed. For as long as a man lives, every moment that he converses in the world, he is still looking upon something or other; except it be when he is asleep, during which time he can scarce be said to live. And therefore, since our enjoyment of God hereafter shall be so continual and without interruption, as to leave no vacant minute which shall not be taken up and filled with that glorious



fruition, it is upon this account most appositely and properly described to us, by our seeing him. For in sight and thought (if in any thing) we have the perpetual motion.

(3.) A third reason of this expression may be, because the sense of seeing is the sense of pleasure and delight; and that upon which the whole comfort of our life principally depends. For, says the wise man in Eccles. xi. 7, "the light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun." And we know, that it is much a greater pleasure for a man to see his friend, than only to hear from him. Put out the eyes, shut but those windows, and the soul will presently be filled with sadness, and horror, and a dismal Egyptian darkness; which we know is to be reckoned amongst the greatest of the Egyptian plagues. Since therefore the enjoyment of God is the highest bliss and pleasure, the most sublime and ravishing delight; for so the scripture speaks of it, in Matt. xxv. 23, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord:" and in Psalm xvi. 11, "In thy presence there is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore:"—I say, since the nature of this blessedness carries in it the height of joy and rational pleasure, by what could it be more lively set forth to us than by the perceptions of that sense and faculty, which conveys the most quickening and exalting refreshments to the soul.

(4.) And lastly; our enjoyment of God is expressed to us by our seeing him, because the sight is of all other senses the most comprehensive and insatiable. In Eccles. i. 8, "the eye," says the wise man, "is not satisfied with seeing." That is to say, let it take in never so much of its object, it never surfeits. It is neither subject to satiety nor lassitude. It could presently run over and drink in the beauties of one world, and in the strength of that repast travel fresh into another. For still the more it takes in, the greater is its capacity to take in more. And in a word, it is the only sense to which satisfaction procures an appetite.

In this respect therefore it gives us the fittest representation of our enjoyment of God in glory: who is a good of that immense latitude, that inexhaustible fulness, as to satisfy, or rather satiate the greediest and most grasping appetites of the soul. It is he only who can fill the eye, and keep pace with desire; and, in a word, answer all those cravings and emptinesses of a rational nature, which the whole creation together could never yet do. There will then flow in such a torrent of delight upon all our apprehensive faculties, that the soul will be even overcome, and lost in the enjoyment. As when a vessel is thrown into a river, the river first fills it, and then swallows it up. This therefore is the sum of our happiness in the next world, that we shall see God, and experiment that which we never could in this world; namely, that we shall so see as to be filled with seeing.

And thus I have despatched the second general head proposed from the words; which was to explain what is meant by our "seeing God:" I come now to

III. The third, which is to show, *how this purity of heart fits and qualifies the soul for the sight or vision of God.* And to give you a short state and account of this, it does it, in a word, by causing a suitableness between God and the soul, and by removing whatsoever may debar or hinder that intimate communion and intercourse, which ought to be between such a creature and its Creator: now during the soul's impurity, God is utterly unsuitable to it: and that in a double respect: 1. Of the great unlikeness; and, 2. Of the contrariety which is between them.

1. And first, for the unlikeness. It is evident, from the clearest and most acknowledged principles of reason, that there can be no true enjoyment, but where there is a certain agreeableness or congruity between the object and the faculty; and if so, what pleasure can it be to a filthy, polluted person to converse with those glories which shall both astonish and reproach him? What enjoyment can dirt have in the embraces of a sunbeam? God is infinitely pure, and till the soul has some degrees of purity too, it is no more fit nor able to behold him, than the black mire of the streets to reflect the orient colours of the rainbow upon the sun which shines upon it. God loves not to look upon any spiritual being, unless he can see his own image and likeness in it; and that cannot be seen, where the mirror is foul that should represent it.

2. The next ground of the unsuitableness between God and the soul, is that great contrariety which a state of impurity causes between them. For it is this which makes the soul look upon God as an enemy; as clothed with terror, and as "a consuming fire;" and upon itself as obnoxious, and fit fuel to be preyed upon and devoured by such a fire. The divine holiness is indeed in itself most amiable, but yet a dreadful and confounding sight to a guilty and defiled soul; as the very light itself, we know, though it be the glory of the creation and the joy of the universe, is yet a frightful and an abhorred thing to thieves and robbers, and to such beasts of prey as lie only in caves and dens, and converse with nothing but filth and darkness under ground.

Heaven is set forth to us as the great mansion of happiness and pleasure, but it is so only to the soul which is prepared for it, and by the renovation of its qualities made congenial to it. But to a soul possessed with the power and guilt of sin, it can be no more a delight, than the openest and sweetest air can be to the fish; which perishes in the region and element which preserves its proper inhabitants; and dies by that which keeps us alive.

And thus we have seen how want of purity utterly incapacitates the soul to enjoy God: namely, by rendering it both unlike him and contrary to him. God's infinite holiness, and his transcendent, amazing brightness, meeting with an impure nature, both shames and consumes it; as the day not only discommends, but also expels and drives away the night. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," says the prophet Habakkuk, i. 13. In a word, God is too pure either to see it, or to be seen by it; and therefore none but the pure in heart can behold him. And so I pass to

IV. The fourth and last thing proposed; which was to make some *brief use and application of the foregoing particulars*. And what better use can be made of them, than to correct our too great easiness and credulity, in judging of the spiritual estate either of ourselves or others. To judge indeed too favourably of others is an error on the right hand: for charity is to pass sentence there, which is a virtue of a benign nature, and whose office is still to think, as well as speak the best of things and persons. Nevertheless, it is one thing to believe charitably, and another to pronounce confidently; and more than the former we cannot do, where the knowledge of the heart is locked up from us; as it is of all men's hearts, besides our own. And in judging of ourselves, I am sure it is charity to suspect the worst; and for every man to probe and descend into his own heart by a strict, accurate, and impartial examination of it. For, "from the heart are the issues of life and death," and from the same must be fetched the evidences of our title to either.

We see many frequent our churches, hear sermons, and attend upon prayers; they are civil in their carriage, upright in their dealings, and there is no great blot or blemish visible upon their conversation; and God forbid, but a due value should be put upon such excellent preparatives to religion: but after all, will these qualifications certainly prove and place us amongst "the pure in heart?" Will men set up for heaven and eternity upon this stock? and venture their salvation upon this bottom? If they do, it may chance to prove a venture indeed. For do not our Saviour's own words convince us, that the outside of the platter may be clean, and bright too, and yet in the inside remain full of all filth and nastiness? So that while one entertains the eye, the other may turn the stomach.

If we would prevent the judgment of God, we must imitate it; and judge of ourselves, as he will judge of us: that is, by the heart, and by the principles which rule there. And for this, let every man be but true to the resolves of his own conscience, and he will seldom need any other casuist. As for those late specious professions of religion amongst us, and those high strains of purity above the rest of the world, together with boastings of a

more intimate converse with God, and acquaintance with the mystery of godliness, and the like ; they are generally nothing else but terms of art, and tricks used by spiritual mountebanks, to impose upon the credulous and unwary ; and signify but little to that all-searching Judge, who judges neither by fine words nor fair pretences. For let men say, or pray, or pretend what they will, he who has a covetous heart, is in the sight of God a covetous wretch. And he who has a proud, a lustful, or a revengeful heart, passes in the accounts of heaven for a proud, a lustful, and a revengeful person. And he who can harbour schism or faction, sacrilege or rebellion, either in principle or design, though he prays never so devoutly, never so loud and long, with all the postures of a solemn hypocrisy, as a sad look and a doleful tone ; yet let him take it from the word of truth itself, that he has nothing pure or pious in his heart : for the main spring, the heart, is out of order ; and therefore the motion of the wheels must needs be so too.

Briefly, and in a word, and with that to conclude : he who has nothing to entitle him to this blessedness of “ seeing God,” but a civil, inoffensive smoothness of behaviour, a demure face, and a formal customary attendance upon a few religious duties, without a thorough renovation of the great principle within him, and a sanctified disposition of heart, may indeed hereafter see God, but then he is like to see him only as his judge.

To which God be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

## SERMON XXIII.

SELF-DENIAL THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS.

GALATIANS V. 24.

*And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*

It is common to all sects and institutions to have some distinguishing badges and characteristic names, by which they both express and distinguish their profession. But Christ, that came into the world, not to imitate, but to correct and transcend both that of the Jews and of the philosophers, sequesters his doctrine from the empty formality of names, reducing it to its inward vigour and spirituality. So that even in respect of the most solemn appellation, we find that Christianity was some time in the world before the name of Christian; perhaps to convince the world, that religion is not a bare name, and that men might be Christians before they were called so; as daily experience demonstrates that they are often called so before they are.

And indeed the name of Christian, without the nature, leaves no more impression upon the soul, than the baptismal water, that conveys it, does upon the face. Wherefore Christ gives another-guess badge and mark of Christianity; such a one as constitutes the very essence of it; for still it is the same thing that gives both nature and difference to beings. Now this discriminating mark is in short comprised in the crucifixion of the flesh and the lusts thereof. For the explication of which words I shall show,

1. What is meant by being Christ's.

2. What by "the flesh with the affections and lusts."

1. For the first of these. *To be Christ's* is to accept of and have an interest in Christ, as he is offered and proposed in the gospel. Now Christ is offered and held forth to every particular person that expects to be saved by him under three offices: 1. his prophetic, 2. his kingly, and 3. his sacerdotal. In which account I give you not only the number of his offices, but also their order, as they stand related to us. And this order and economy of them is founded upon the very nature of the thing, and the natural order of religious actions. For in the procedure of nature there must be, 1. The knowledge of a duty; 2. The performance of it; 3. The reward. Correspondent to these is the economy of Christ's offices. For, 1. By Christ's prophetic

office, revealing his mind to us, we come to know his will. 2. Then by his kingly office, ruling and governing us, we come to yield obedience to that will. 3. And thirdly, by his sacerdotal or priestly office, we come to receive the fruit of that obedience in our justification and salvation. For we must not think that our obedience is rewarded with eternal life, for its own merit, but it is the merit of Christ's sacrifice that procures this reward to our obedience.

Some indeed preposterously misplace these, and make us partake of the benefit of Christ's priestly office in the forgiveness of our sins, and our reconciliation to God, before we are brought under the sceptre of his kingly office by our obedience. But such must know, that our interest in Christ as a lord and king to rule us, does precede, if not also cause, our interest in him as a priest to save us. For the gospel perverts not the order of nature; the work must still go before the reward. And those shall never share in the benefit of Christ's sacrifice, who have not submitted to the rule of his sceptre.

Now, therefore, to sum this up into a firm conclusion, he, and he alone, is properly said to be Christ's, who upon a sound knowledge of, and a sincere obedience to, Christ's will, stands justified and reconciled to God by the merit of his death and sufferings: and thus he is perfectly Christ's, who has an interest in him considered under every one of his offices. This may serve to overthrow the wild and irrational justification of the antinomians, libertines, and lazy solifidians, who upon this ground only judge themselves to be Christ's, because they believe they are. A way of justification, for its easiness, rather to be wished true than to be thought so. But easy things in religion are always suspicious, if not false; and such will find, that their belief is not the rule of God's proceeding.

2. In the next place we are to see what is meant by "the flesh, and the affections and lusts." By the first I suppose I need not tell you that it cannot be understood of the corporeal bulk of man, which together with the soul makes up the whole compound; but it is rather a metonymy of the part for the whole, or perhaps more properly of the subject for the adjunct, the flesh for the sin adherent to the flesh, as shall be made out by and by. In the mean time by *flesh* we are to understand the whole entire body of sin and corruption, that inbred proneness in our nature to all evil, in one word expressed by *concupiscence*, usually called by the schoolmen *fomes*; that fuel or combustible matter in the soul, that is apt to be fired by every temptation; the womb that conceives and brings forth all actual impurities, styled in the next words, "affections and lusts." By which we are not to understand only the brutish affections of carnal sensuality, but indifferently all the actual eruptions of that accursed principle; all the streams that issue from that impure fountain; for as by "the

flesh" is denoted the original depraved disposition of the heart; so by the other is signified the drawing forth of that propensity or principle into the several commissions of sin through the course of our lives; flesh is the fuel, and lust the flame.

Having thus given the explication of the words, and shown what is to be understood by "being Christ's," and what by "the flesh and its affections," we shall lay the further prosecution of the text in these two things.

I. To show why this vitiosity and corrupt habit of nature comes to have this denomination of "flesh."

II. What is imported by the "crucifying" of it.

I. For the first of these. The whole depravation of our nature comes to be called "flesh" for these reasons:

1. Because of its situation and place, which is principally in the flesh. Here it is placed, here it is enthroned. Concupiscence, I show, was the radix of all sin, and all the several kinds of sin, to which men are severally inclined, are only so many modifications or different postures of concupiscence; and concupiscence itself follows the crasis and temperature of the body; as we know the liquor for the present receives the figure of the vessel into which it is infused. If you would know why one man is proud, another cruel, another intemperate or luxurious, you are not to repair so much to Aristotle's Ethics, or the writings of other moralists, as to those of Galen, or of some anatomist, to find the reason of these different tempers; for doubtless they arise from the different quality of the blood and the motion of the spirits in those several persons: which things themselves depend upon the climate, diet, and air, in which men are born and bred. Hence we see, that those of the same climate are usually disposed to the same sin. Whereupon some have presumed to set down the standing characters of several nations; as that the Grecians are false; the Spaniards formal, grave, and proud; the French wordy, fickle, and fantastic; the Italians lustful; and the English mutinous and insolent to governors. And these characters, if true, seem to agree to these several nations, not only for one age, but successively in all generations: as waters of a river running in the same channel always retain the same colour, taste, and breed the same sorts of fish. And it is not to be questioned, but that it was the same humour that raised the barons' wars, and since acted higher in the late rebellion. I do not believe a transmigration of souls, but surely there is something to be observed that looks very like a transmigration of tempers and manners; so constantly does posterity succeed into the humours, appetites, and ways of their progenitors.

But let not any one gather from what has been said, that I place sin in the body only, not in the soul also: for in the body I place only the first seeds and occasions of it, which immediately,

upon the sociation of the soul with the body, communicates and transfuses the contagion to that likewise; as we see in stills and alembics, though the fire put under, and the materials put within them, lie in the lower part, yet they send up a steam and exhalation, which settles into drops in the upper part: so all the perturbations of bodily affections, though they are seated in the body, which is the lower part, yet they continually exhale and breathe forth sinful vapours, that leave a guilt and impurity upon the soul; yea, even upon the top and commanding faculties, the understanding and the will: though, to pursue that similitude a little further, as that which rises from the bottom of the still is but a vapour, and becomes not a drop till it settles upon the upper part of it, so that which comes from the body is but a bare disturbance, and comes not to the proper form and nature of a sin, till consented to and owned by the soul. From what has been laid down, Aristotle observes, that intemperance and luxury about things that affect the body and grosser senses leaves a kind of stupidity and sottishness upon the mind also; as the uppermost part of the chimney is blacked by the fire that burns below.

How the body should affect the soul, that which is material work upon that which is immaterial, is, I confess, a problem hardly resolved in philosophy; but experience shows the truth of the thing by its apparent and undeniable effects: and reason itself will not prove that we ought to reject the thing, because we are ignorant of the manner, unless reason would prove also, that we might know every thing. But where philosophy seems to contradict a divine truth, there it is to be reputed vain, and we are to fetch the decision of the case from faith.

Divines, in the matter of original sin, which upon good grounds we believe, though I suppose few can explain the way of its propagation; they, I say, acknowledge that the soul, which is by immediate creation infused by God into the body, comes pure, unspotted, and untainted with the least sin; but upon the union and conjunction of it with the body, it contracts a pollution, and so the whole man becomes presently sinful; as the purest water issuing from the fountain, when it slides into a dirty and a muddy kennel, it immediately loses its clearness and virginity, and becomes as filthy as the place in which it runs. This discovers, that it is the body that first sullies and besmears the soul; here is the *malum propter vicinum malum*, this is the unhappy neighbourhood; for no sooner are they joined, no sooner are the body and the soul made brothers, but they are brethren in iniquity.

Conformable to what has been said, is the verdict of the holy scripture. Hear the exclamation of St. Paul, Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" It was his body that wounded, that, as it were, stifled his soul: hence it cries out, as one sinking in a bog or quagmire,



for immediate deliverance. This sociable evil, this treacherous companion, is the enticer and betrayer to all sin. Hence again Paul lays the stress and load of all upon this, in the 18th verse of the same chapter, "In me, that is, my flesh," says he, "there dwelleth no good thing." He carried his prison about him, nay his bane, his poison, had he not had an antidote from grace: it was a magazine for the weapons of unrighteousness, a full, endless, inexhaustible storehouse of all filth and corruption.

This truth, that sin has its first situation and place in the flesh, and that from hence it borrows its name in common dialect of scripture, is yet further clear from this; that the most mortified and sanctified persons in the world cannot by any means wholly discharge themselves from the relics of sin and concupiscence while they are yet in the body; as having soaked and insinuated itself into the very vital constitution of it: but immediately after they die, and the soul comes to be delivered from the body, we hold that the sanctification of it is then perfect and consummate; so that it sins no more, the very being, as well as the guilt of sin is then destroyed; the soul is then sprightly, pure, and vigorous, like the spirit or quintessence of a liquor extracted from the dregs and the captivity of matter; or like a pleasant bird that is released from a nasty cage: the soul then finds its activity restored with its purity, and so mounts up to heaven, where it enjoys its Maker by a bright and a clear intuition, and converses with him for ever: and this is an evident demonstration that the vitiosity of our nature is first situate and fixed in the flesh.

The papists indeed hold, that the souls of the saints, at least of the plebeian and ordinary saints, are not immediately, upon the dissolution of the body, freed wholly from the being and inherency of sin, but are sent into a place called *purgatory*, where the fire is to calcine and purge off the dross of sin from the soul, before it can be fitted for the society of the blessed. But this is a fabulous and a gross conceit, and were it not gainful, unworthy the patronage of any learned popish writer. For how can the fire burn the soul? and then how can it burn off sin? Do we think that sin sticks upon the soul like rust upon a piece of iron? But these things are so ridiculous and absurd, that to repeat them is to confute them.

2. The vitiosity of our nature is called "flesh," because of its close, inseparable nearness to the soul. There is an intimate conjunction and union between the soul and sin; and the intimacy of their coherence is the cause of the intimacy of their friendship. Sin is fixed in the heart, and therefore it lies in the bosom. Hence, to show the individual estate and the indissoluble tie of matrimony, the Spirit takes a similitude from this, *Matt. xix. 5*, and says, "They two shall be one flesh." The soul, while it is embodied, can no more be divided from sin, than the

body itself can be considered without flesh. The nearness between these two, our soul and our corruption, is so great, that it arises to a kind of identity: hence to deny and conquer our sin is, in scripture language, to deny ourselves, implying, that sin adheres so close to us, that it is a kind of second self.

I do not say that the substance of the soul is evil, or that the being and nature of it is sinful; but that the stain of sin contracted by it clings so fast to it, that it is scarce to be fetched off. Blackness is not the substance of the ink, yet it is inseparable from it.

See the nearness of sin to the soul, by observing the ways and means by which God endeavours to part them, and without which they cannot be divided. No less than the blood of the Son of God to wash off the stain of sin; no less than the Spirit of God to subdue the power; nothing but an infinite price, joined with an infinite power, can work the division. Hence the effectual sin-conquering force of the word is expressed by this dividing quality, Heb. iv. 12, "It is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow." Is there any thing more closely united than the joint and the marrow? than the soul and the spirit? Yes, the soul and sin. Hereupon, the word being to disenthral the soul from it, must have the same effect upon it that the sword has upon the body, which is, by penetration and dividing the continuity of the parts; for every wound is properly division, an opening or loosening the compactness and closeness of the thing upon which the impression is made. Wherefore if the great business of the word is to wound and divide the soul from sin, it follows, that they were once intimately and closely cemented together; the connexion between these two is a Gordian knot, that cannot be dissolved but by this spiritual sword.

We misapply the command of loving our neighbour, and misplace our affection; for sin is our nearest neighbour, and we love that most; it cleaves, it adheres, it sticks to us; but it is as the viper did to Paul's hand. And we may say of it as Christ did of Judas, "He that betrays me is with me:" sin is, as it were, engrafted into the soul, and thereby made connatural to it, and consequently as a stock upon which another scion is engrafted; the soul does not bring forth its own natural fruit, but the fruit of sin. They are mutually knit and entwined one within the other. Hence the power of remitting sins is in the gospel termed, Matt. xvi. 19, the power of loosing, as the contrary is of binding. Sin has bound itself as close upon the soul as the bonds or fetters that pinion and hold fast an imprisoned malefactor.

The same union is yet further evident from the state of every unsanctified, unregenerate person in his death: at which great change, though he leaves his body, he retains his sin; but still

keeps close to his side, and follows him into another world. A man's corruption, if dying in his sin, is to him like a bad servant or an unfaithful soldier; though it lives with him, yet it will be sure not to die with him. And this may be the second reason of this denomination.

3. A third reason why the vitiosity of our nature is called "flesh" is, because of its dearness to us. And this founded upon the former, for vicinity is one cause of love. Now there is nothing that we prosecute with a more affectionate tenderness than our flesh; for, as the apostle says, Eph. v. 29, "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it." How does the soul sympathize with it, either in its sufferings or its comforts! one would think that reason was even swallowed up in sense: how does every change of weather affect the mind! how sensible is it of every winter's blast, every summer's heat, of the sweetness of ease and the tortures of pain, as if, by conversing with the body, it even grew corporeal. If any the least member is hurt, what a general auxiliary, what a concurrent help is there from all the rest! the eye bewails, the tongue bemoans, and the hand plasters and foment it; and all this to rescue a base carcass from that which will one day certainly attach it, death and dissolution.

But in the mean time the conscience may be wounded, the soul bruised and broken with the fatal blows of sin and temptation, and lie even gasping at the brink of eternal death, and yet we feel no pain there, neither seek for a remedy; it may faint and bleed, and we never ask whether there is any balm in Gilead, any spiritual surgeon to pour oil into our wounds. For see whether it is not the usual custom of men not to think of their soul till their body is given over; nor to send for the divine, till they are left by the physician; so dear is this flesh to us: for if it were not so, could we think the drunkard would ruin his soul to please his palate? would the unclean person pawn eternity for the gratification of a base appetite? Nay, take a survey of all the arts, the trades, and the most prized inventions in the world, and you will find ten to four found out and employed either to please or adorn the flesh: it is for this that the artificer labours, and the merchant ventures; and we compass sea and land ten times oftener to make a gallant, than to make a proselyte. Justly therefore upon this account also does the Spirit express our sin by the name of "flesh," for this has an equal share in our love.

Sin is our darling, our Delilah, the queen regent of our affections; it fills all our thoughts, engrosses our desires, and challenges the service of all our actions. Can there be any greater love than the love of a mother to her child? And we know the scripture tells us, that sin is "conceived and brought forth" by the soul, James i. 15. Doubt not therefore but it shall be cherished and beloved as a child; it is the firstborn of the soul,

the beginning of its strength; but it is such a firstborn to it as Reuben was to Jacob; such a one as he had for ever cause to curse.

I shall not stand to show the excessive love that the miserable, bewitched soul of man bears to sin, much less shall I stand to prove it. Let it suffice us to observe, from the constant incessant practices of the world, that there is no cost, study, travail, and labour, either to preserve health, to defend life, or to endear friends, which is not with an abundant overplus of charge and expense freely and greedily laid out upon the satisfaction of sin, and that in its most tyrannical and unreasonable demands. What that man in Micah vi. 7 proffers for the expiation, many hundreds would give for the preservation of their sin; "thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil, yea the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul;" so dear does sin usually cost men in this world, though much dearer in another. This is their paramour, they court it, they go a whoring after it, as the usual scripture expression is; they will not, though you fling the vengeance of God and the fire of hell in their faces, be plucked away, but maugre all curses or promises, terrors or entreaties, they will even die in the fatal embraces of their dear but killing corruption; and as some will rather rot and perish, and be eaten through with a gangrene or an ulcer than undergo the painful cutting and lancing of their flesh, because they are delicate and tender of it: so the soul will, through the same tenderness to a cruel lust, see itself overgrown, infected, poisoned, and at length ruined by it, rather than remedy and remove it, by the healing severity of a thorough mortification. Let this therefore be the third and last reason why the Spirit has here set forth the perversity and corruption of our nature by the name of "flesh."

Now what has been hitherto discoursed of may, by way of inference, suggest these things to our consideration.

1. The deplorable estate of fallen man; whose condition is now such, that he carries his plague about him, and wears it something nearer to him than his shirt; that he encloses a viper in his bowels, feeds and maintains, and is passionately fond of his mortal enemy; and what is the greatest misery of all, has it not in his power to be otherwise; he has a body that is not so much the instrument or servant, as the dungeon of his soul: and sin holds him by such bonds of pleasure so strong, so suitable to his perverted and diseased inclinations, that his ruin is presented to him as his interest, and nothing gratifies, delights, or wins upon him, but that which dishonours his Maker, and certainly destroys himself.

2. The next thing offered from hence to our thoughts is, the great difficulty of the duty of mortification: this is a greater work than men are aware of: it is indeed the killing of an enemy, but of such an enemy as a man thinks his friend, and loves as his

child; and how hard it is to put the knife to the throat of an Isaac is easily imaginable. What! part with that that came into the world with me, and has ever since lived and conversed with me, that continually lies down and rises up with me, that has even incorporated itself into my nature, seized all my appetites, and possessed all my faculties, so that it is the centre and principle of all my pleasures, and that which gives a relish and a quickness to every object! This is a hard saying, and a harder undertaking. He must be a good orator that should persuade a man to stick daggers and needles in his flesh, to strip his bones, and in a manner to tear his nature over his eyes; yet to mortify a sin is something like it: but alas! it would go near to nonplus the most artificial persuader, to bring a man to part with the covering of his body; but how much more with the vestment of his soul!

Surely there is no love to God less than that which will induce a man to lay down his life for God, that can enforce him to mortify a corruption for him; and this, one would think, should awaken those who sacrifice to their own dreams, who spread themselves paths of roses to a fool's paradise, and design heaven upon those terms of easiness that the gospel knows not of: but it is an attempt that will cost many a smart blow, many a bitter rencounter, and many a passage through the fiery furnace, before the innate filth of our nature can be severed from us. And whatsoever measures a man may propose to himself, he will find, that to mortify a lust, and to be a Christian, is a harder work than now and then to lift up his eyes, to cry, Lord, Lord! or to hear an absolution, which perhaps does not at all belong to him.

3. In the third and last place, this declares to us the mean and sordid employment of every sinner: he serves the flesh, that is, he is a drudge and a scavenger to the most inferior part of his nature. It is a low and an unmanly thing for any person to be laborious and solicitous, and to spend much time in dressing and adorning his body; it shows him to be a fop, a trifle, and a mere picture; but then how much more ignoble must it be to attend upon his body, in the dishonourable provisions for the lusts and corruptions of it!

If it be a preferment to handle sores and ulcers, to converse with diseases, and all the filth of a distempered body, then may it pass for a generous employment, to be sedulous in obeying the dictates of sin and the commands of the flesh; but as the service of God is perfect freedom, so the service of the flesh is perfect, entire, complete slavery.

II. I proceed now to the second general thing proposed for the handling of the words, and that is, to show *what is imported by the crucifixion of the flesh*; under which I shall do these things:

1. I shall show what is the reason of the use of it in this place.
2. What is the full force, sense, and significance of it.

3. Prescribe some means for enabling us to the duty signified by it.

4. Make some useful corollaries and deductions from the whole.

1. For the first of these: this word is here used by way of allusion to Christ, of whose behaviour and sufferings every Christian is to be a living copy and representation. Christ will have his death an example to excite, as well as a sacrifice to save: and there is no passage in his life and death but is intended for our instruction, as well as our salvation. Upon this score we are bid to "put on Christ," as a garment, Rom. xiii. 14. For as in a garment there is an apposite fitness and commensuration of each part of that to every part of the body; so there is nothing in the whole series of Christ's life and death, but ought in some measure to be answered and transcribed by every believer; as affording to us for every action not only a pattern, but a motive.

We read of Christ's nativity: here every Christian is to turn a history into a precept, and read in himself the necessity of a new birth. We find the passion and the crucifixion of Christ for sin: now what can this better suggest to us, than the crucifying sin, the cause of his crucifixion? We read and admire his resurrection from the dead: certainly this might infer in us a spiritual resurrection from the death of sin and the grave, and stench of corruption. Nay, if we have that Christian dexterity and skill of a proper application of these passages, we shall find a correspondent homogeneous quality derived from each. We shall die with him, and we shall rise with him: we shall find something in his cross that shall kill our sins; something in his resurrection that shall revive our graces: for if we transfer and place it even upon a natural cause, what is it else, but for the body to sympathize with the head?

The Socinians indeed place the whole business of our redemption upon a bare imitation; and the truth is, to say no more, (if you will admit the expression,) they do indeed make Christ an example, and that in a much more ignominious way than the Jews did. But now though they place the whole redemption wrought by Christ in a bare following and expressing his example, let not us therefore transgress into the other extreme, and totally exclude this imitation; for undoubtedly Christ in all his sufferings left us a pattern, as well as paid a price.

There is none that seems to have so evangelical and raised a notion of this, as the apostle Paul in Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." Paul seems to be recovered to his spiritual life, as the youth upon whom Elisha stretched himself. The prophet put his face to the other's face, his eyes, his mouth, his hands, to the eyes, mouth, and hands of the other; and so, by an adequate application of his body to each part, he brought him at length to enjoy the same life with himself. Thus

Paul, as it were, stretched himself upon the same cross with Christ, and by exactly conforming to his sufferings and death, was advanced to the similitude of his life. Hence it is said, 2 Tim. ii. 12, "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." And Paul, in that excellent discourse, Phil. iii. 10, vents a heavenly passionate desire, that he might "know the power of Christ's resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." And thus to endeavour to be like Christ is a laudable, nay, a dutiful ambition; it is our sin to worship, but our duty to be his picture; for doubtless every Christian is obliged not only to obey, but also to represent his Saviour.

Certainly Paul, in Gal. vi. 14, where he says, that he is "crucified to the world," and tells the believing Romans, in Rom. vi. 6, that "their old man is crucified with Christ," could have expressed the same thing by other words, sufficiently significant, as that he was mortified, and his worldly desires extinguished, and that their corruptions were abated, weakened, and subdued; but he rather says "crucified." The other, indeed, would have expressed his purity, but this by a peculiar significance imports his Christianity, as not only declaring an excellent life, but also the example that caused it. It is like fair writing, with the copy prefixed and set above it. The business of a Christian is not invention, but imitation: and because he is too ignorant to prescribe to himself, all his perfection is to follow, and Christ gives every Christian this comprehensive summary compendium of his duty, "Let him take up his cross and follow me." And if we would abridge all religion into this short dichotomy, the sum of our belief is Christ, and of our obedience conformity.

Having thus shown the reason of the use of the word here, I proceed now to

2. The second thing, which is, to show the full force and significance of it. Crucifying therefore, as it is here applied to the corruption and depraved sinful disposition of our nature, imports these four things:

(1.) The death of it. The cross is the instrument of death, and to crucify is to kill. A few interrupted assaults and combats with a man's corruption will not suffice: he may give it some blows, and wounds, and bruises, but after all these it may recover; and we know the seed of the woman was not only to bruise, but to break the serpent's head.

He that will crucify his sin must pursue it to the very death. Many, after they have been something humbled for their sin, and for a while have used the means of mortification, so as to terrify it from a present acting, and have taken off something of the edge of its fury, conclude that the day is won, and the enemy routed, when by sad experience they find at length that

it is, but a retreat, and the return is more furious and dangerous than ever. An enemy is never overcome till he is killed; and those only act like wise men who think so.

We are to crucify our corruptions, as the Jews did Christ; the whippings, scourgings, and buffetings, were but the forerunners and beginnings of the grand suffering that was intended. It was his life and his blood that they thirsted after. Now it is but for a man to change the scene, and act the same upon his own corruption. Sin stands as a malefactor condemned to death by the law of God; and God has entrusted every man with the execution of his own sin; and God will require life for life; so that if a man lets his sin escape alive, the life of his soul must be its ransom.

There is nothing that betrays and ruins men, as to the great concerns of their eternal happiness, so much as half and imperfect mortifications of their sin, but supposed to be perfect and complete; for they give sin rather a respite than a ruin; a time of breathing and of recollecting its strength, and a more prevailing insinuation upon the heart, upon the vicissitude and the return: so that a man is strangely baffled and set backwards in the main work of repentance, while he sees all his endeavours unravelled, and his sin grow upon him afresh, like weeds only cropped and cut, whereas they should have been rooted up.

If a man thinks that he has given a shrewd blow to his lust, let him know that this is an argument for him to pursue his advantage, and to redouble his strokes upon it, to a perfect conquest, rather than to acquiesce, as if he had achieved something sufficient to acquit himself in the combat. The utmost cruelty to an inveterate enemy is always successful, if sufficiently powerful; but if a man shall content himself to have given such an adversary a scratch on the hand, when he might and should have stabbed him to the heart, let him thank himself, if in the issue he fall by a recovered fury, and die by that strength that he spared, to his own ruin.

Wherefore when we are thus commanded to "crucify the flesh," let every one understand the full latitude of this precept; and remember that he is charged to kill his corruption. God's hatred is directed to the life and being of sin; and for a man to spare that, is to be absurdly cruel to his own soul. To strike it, to war against it, without designing its death, is but hypocrisy. A Saul may captivate and imprison an Agag, but a pious Samuel will slay him.

(2.) As it implies death, so it further imports a violent death. Sin never dies of age. It is as when a young man dies in the full fire and strength of his youth, by some vehement distemper; it as it were tears, and forces, and fires his soul out of his body. He that will come and fight it out with his corruption to the last shall find, that it will sell its life at a dear rate; it will



strive and fight for it, and many a doubtful conflict will pass between that and the soul. It may give a man many a wound, many a foil, and many a disheartening blow: for, believe it, the strong man will fight for his possession. Never think to dispossess him by a bare summons, or imagine that a man can recover the mastery of his heart and his affections by a few prayers and broken humiliations. No, such a mortifying course must be taken, and such constant violences and severities used, as shall try and shake every power of the soul, before a corruption can be despatched. The conquest had need be glorious, for it will be found by sharp experience, that the combat will be dangerous.

The soul is engaged with such an enemy as will require both the onsets of force and the stratagems of art. Sin will never quit its hold quietly; but, like the devil, who if we hear is conjured down, it is always in a storm. That man that allows himself in his sin, and humours his corruption, let him consider, that if God ever intend to save him from it, what it will cost him to conquer it; kill it he must, but then it will not be killed like a lamb, which resists not the knife, but like a wolf or a wild boar; he must run it down, and conquer it, before he can kill it; and though God do give him the grace to conquer it in the issue, yet he must go the hazard and the dubious adventure of being conquered himself. When a man is put to effect any thing with violence, it is troublesome to him that does, as well as grievous to him that suffers it. This therefore is the second thing implied in the crucifixion of sin, to despatch it by a violent death.

(3.) To crucify the flesh with the affections of it imports a painful, bitter, and vexatious death. Let us but reflect upon our Saviour: he was nailed to the tree, and that through those parts which were most apprehensive of pain, the hands and the feet: which members, by reason of the concurrence of the nerves and sinews there, must needs be of quickest sense: thus he hung, in the extremity of torture, till, through the insupportable pressures of pain, he at length gave up the ghost.

Now we are still to take the former observation along with us, that the occasion of the use of this expression here is an allusion to Christ's crucifixion: so that the crucifying the flesh must express the pain also, or the resemblance would not be perfect. This supposed, it would be well that such as are quick and forward to profess the name and undertake the rigour of a Christian course, would first sit down and calculate and ponder the difficulties, the hard, grating, and afflicting contrariety that it bears to the flesh. They are to live as upon the rack; to hear the cries of a tormented, dying corruption, without relenting; when our greatest desires thirst and beg for satisfaction, they are to be answered only with renewed exercises of mortification; when we have got them upon the cross, we are to treat them as the Jews did Christ; when they thirst and call out for their former plea-

tures, to give them the vinegar and the gall of sharper and sharper severities. The cravings of our dearest and most beloved affections are to be denied; and what a torment is it when desire is upon the career, to separate between the enjoyment and the appetite! It is like rending the skin from the flesh, or the flesh from the bone: yet this is to be done; nor are we to be surprised with wonder at it; for certainly no man was ever crucified without pain.

The punishment of the cross is of all others the quickest and the most acute; it is the universal stretching of all the limbs from the joints, so universal, that there is not the least part, sinew, or fibre in the body, but it is distended. So the mortification of sin is to be so general and diffused, as not only to fix upon the bulk and body of sin, but to stretch the inquisition to every the least desire, the most lurking and secret affection; for assuredly there is something more than ordinary implied in this expression of "crucifying sin:" it cannot but import the most rugged, cruel, and remorseless dealing with it that is imaginable. And however men are nice and favourable to their corruption, yet did they consider what endless pains, what unspeakable torments, their corrupt affections and lusts prepare for them, even self-love could not but be religion enough to make them prevent such miseries, by first inflicting them upon the author.

Every man should remember, that for all his indulgence to sin, sin will not spare him; even that corruption that lies in his bosom will prosecute him, and cry out for justice against him at the judgment of the great day. Besides, why should we grudge at the painfulness of this duty, when it is confessed, that every wound given to sin cannot but pain the sinner; but then if we consider withal, that God has decreed to pardon and save none, without giving them some taste of the smart and bitter fruit of sin, we have cause to adore his mercy in this, that the pain we take in mortifying sin, will be the only pain that we shall ever endure for it.

(4.) In the fourth and last place, crucifixion denotes a shameful and a cursed death; it is such a one as was marked out and signalized with a peculiar malediction, even of old, by God himself, Deut. xxi. 23, "He that is hanged on a tree is accursed of God;" and for the shame of it, it is so great amongst all nations, that the infamy were a sufficient punishment without the pain: so that the Romans used it to slaves only, and the vilest malefactors. Hence, in Heb. vi. 6, such apostates as are said by their unworthy behaviour to crucify Christ, are said also to "put him to an open shame."

Thus therefore must the corruption and vitiosity of our nature be dealt with. God has doomed it to death, without the benefit of so much as dying honourably. If there be any scorn, loathing, and detestation due to a dying offender, certainly it is much

more due to the sin that made him so. Hereupon God has provided one great instrument for the mortifying of sin, which is the irksome shame of confession; I do not mean the auricular pick-pocket confession of the papists, but public confession, such a one as David exercised, when he confessed his sins before the whole congregation; and such a one as the primitive Christian church required of scandalous excommunicate persons, before they were readmitted into its communion. And indeed if we consider the temper of man's mind, confession is of all other penalties the most shameful; shameful I mean to sin, though glorious to the confessing sinner.

Hence also humiliation for sin is expressed by "taking shame to ourselves." And certainly if shame is not judicially awarded as the punishment, it will naturally follow as the fruit and effect of sin. See all the cursed deaths, the confusion and consternation that attends malefactors: it is all to be ascribed to this cursed cause, that they would not shame their sin, and therefore their sin has now shamed and confounded them. Considering therefore how sin has stained the beauty of our nature, and covered it with the shames and dishonours of corruption, whatsoever we do, or can inflict upon it of this kind, it is not so much a punishment from the law of God, as a proper retaliation from ourselves.

Having thus shown what is imported by the crucifying of sin, I proceed now to

3. The third thing proposed, which is, to prescribe some means for the enabling of us to the performance of this duty. Two therefore I shall mention as conducive to this crucifixion of the flesh, with its affections and lusts.

(1.) The first is a constant and pertinacious denying them in all their cravings for satisfaction. A man by fasting too long, may come to lose his stomach; so an affection abridged and tied up from its proper gratification comes by degrees to be chastised and even wearied into sobriety; for frequent disappointments in a thing eagerly desired will at length leave a kind of indifference in the desires as to that thing. As on the contrary, every gratification of a corrupt appetite exasperates, calls forth, and enlarges it to new, and greater, and more restless expectations.

Let a man therefore begin the crucifixion of his flesh in these negative mortifications; that is, when his voluptuous humour is clamorous for pleasure, let him not answer any of those calls: if he would not maintain it, let him not feed it: he will find that so much as it wants of food, it will lose of its fierceness. This is the course taken for the taming of wild beasts, to reduce and order them by the disciplines of hunger, by long and frequent frustrations of their ravenous appetites. And the reason of this course is founded in a natural cause. For though the design of every appetite is to purvey for nature, and to derive strength to that by receiving

such and such objects; yet by the same means it first feeds and strengthens itself. It being like some collectors of public monies, who indeed are employed and intended to serve the exchequer, but yet in the mean time use to be very kind to themselves. In a word, the defraudation of the appetites of sin weakens the whole body of sin and themselves also; as on the other side all satisfaction corroborates and inflames them. And he that takes up a resolution to crucify his intemperance, luxury, or uncleanness, yet, when they call for their usual refection, and a fair occasion knocks at his door, or his companions call upon him, has no power to deny either the entreaty of his appetite within, or to slight the invitation of tempting objects from without, he may as well expect to tame a wolf by feeding him, or to extinguish a flame by heaping fuel upon it, as to mortify a sin upon these terms. His attempt is absurd, his success desperate, and his lust must and will prevail.

(2.) The other means to crucify a corrupt affection, is to encounter it by actions of the opposite virtue. This differs from the former thus: that that was only the denying of fuel to a fire, but this a pouring water upon it, and so vanquishing it by the prevalence of a contrary element. He that is profane, let him subdue his profaneness by the exercise of prayer and meditation. He that is covetous, let him dispossess his mind of that vice by actions of charity and liberality: for as vicious actions frequently repeated produce a vicious habit, that infects and ferments the whole soul; so the like frequent repetition of virtuous actions does by degrees loosen, and at length totally unfix and drive out that habit of vice. Now this is both the nobler and the speedier way of conquest; as it is more glorious to break open than to starve a city, and to take it by force than by surrender. Both indeed are equally conquests, but the latter is the greater triumph.

And thus much for the means by which we may be enabled to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts.

4. Come we now to the fourth and last thing, viz. to see what may be drawn by way of consequence and deduction from what has hitherto been delivered.

(1.) First of all then we collect the high concernment and the absolute necessity of every man's crucifying his carnal worldly affections. I know no work so difficult and unpleasing, but its necessity is an abundant argument to enforce it. And I suppose every one will grant, that it is necessary for him to be a Christian: yet unless he has crucified the flesh he cannot be so, and his assuming that title is only a nullity and a usurpation.

Upon this small hinge therefore turns the grand determination of our eternal estate, whether as to happiness or misery. The whole round of man's happiness, from the first dawnings of it in the revelations of grace, to the last consummation of it in glory,

runs solely and entirely upon this. Without this, not so much as the blessing of word and sacraments, but it is poisoned with a curse. For first, he that comes to Christ's table who is not Christ's, is in God's esteem only as a dog catching at the children's bread. He that prays to Christ, and yet is not Christ's, is but as a rebel presenting a petition; if he intrudes into the participation of ordinances, and the society of the saints, he is a guest without either invitation or wedding garment, where his best entertainment will be the imprisonment of a malefactor, instead of the welcome of a guest. On the other hand, take all the solid happiness of this life, and the hopes of a better, the privileges of the sanctified, and the eternal fruitions of the glorified, and they are all compendiously but fully couched in this one word, "to be Christ's."

¶ (2.) In the next place, we gather a standing and infallible criterion, by which to distinguish those that are not Christ's from those that are, and consequently to convince us how few Christians there are in the world; or, to speak more closely, how few Christians there are in Christendom; and that the common use and acceptation of this word is much larger than its real signification. Much the greater number and proportion of men lie wallowing in all the filth and the pollutions of the flesh. But I suppose the precedent discourse has been a sufficient demonstration, that he and he alone has a right to this glorious appellative of a Christian, and to the privileges that attend it, who has mastered his depraved nature, cashiered his corrupt inclinations, and offered violence to his dearest, when sinful affections: so that he overcomes and triumphs, and sees his sin bleeding at his feet. In sum, he only is Christ's who has executed the utmost of that pious cruelty upon his sin, that we have seen hitherto imported by crucifixion.

But it will be replied, that this is a hard and a discouraging assertion, that none should be reputed Christ's, unless he has fully crucified and destroyed his sin.

But to this I answer, that we must here distinguish of a two-fold destruction of sin. 1. In respect of a total abolition: thus every one that is Christ's must have destroyed his sin in design and purpose; this he must intend, whatsoever God enables him to effect; this must be aimed at, whatsoever is reached. 2. In respect of a sincere, though imperfect inchoation: and thus every one must actually destroy his sin; that is, he must actually begin and be about the work. Where we may observe, that this is properly, nay, with an emphatical significance, implied by crucifixion; for a man is not dead as soon as crucified. We know our Saviour and the two thieves hung some hours upon the cross before they breathed their last: so sin, though it is not immediately dead, yet it is truly crucified if it is a dying. It may struggle for life, indeed, yet for all that it may be under the pangs and power of death.

But to show what is the least degree of the crucifixion of sin indispensably required to entitle a man to this transcendent privilege of being Christ's, I shall lay down this position, viz. that he in a true evangelical sense is to be reputed Christ's, who has crucified his sin, as to an active resolution against it; I say active resolution; where this term *active* does not illustrate, but imply the nature of it. There is a kind of identity in these terms *active resolution*, as when we say, a rational man, where the predicate does not describe, but include the subject.

Which, by the way, is a sure, unfailing rule for men to try the sincerity of their resolutions by. Many are prone to think, that they are resolved against sin, when indeed they only deceive and abuse themselves, and are not so; for that is no resolution, that is not seconded with vigorous suitable endeavours: if it is not active, it is not so much as resolution. But he that pursues, and backs, and follows home purpose with endeavour, resolution with action, he has given his corruption its death-blow; he has crucified it; and if he does not intermit this course, he shall see his victory completed in the death of his adversary. And thus I affirm, that the crucifixion of sin realized in a sincere though partial mortification of it, makes a man a believer, instates him in grace, entitles him to glory, and, in a word, renders him truly Christ's. And indeed, if this does not, we may conclude, according to that of our Saviour, though in a different sense, "when the Son of man comes will he find faith upon the earth?" For if this be rejected as no sufficient condition to interest a man in the merits of Christ's death, and the redemption he has purchased, as God indeed has limited the number of saints to very few, so I am afraid that upon these terms we shall reduce it almost to none, and make the passage to heaven yet narrower than ever God made it: who, even in the midst of a sinner's condemnation, is the God that delights to save, and not to condemn.

To which God be rendered and ascribed, &c.

## SERMON XXIV.

A CURSE DENOUNCED AGAINST BLOODSHED.

HABAKKUK II. 12.

*Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood !*

THIS short prophecy, out of which I have selected this portion of scripture to discourse of upon this sad and solemn occasion, was uttered (as interpreters do conjecture, for know it certainly they cannot) about the latter end of the reign of King Josiah, or at least in the following reign of his son, but however some time before the Babylonish captivity, that being the great event which it foretells, and the chief subject of which it treats.

The whole prophecy contains in it these two parts: 1st. A double complaint made by the prophet; 2dly. A double answer returned to it by God.

And first for the complaint. The prophet cries out of the horrid impiety, the great perfidiousness, and general corruption of the Jewish nation, then grown to that height, that he was forced to invoke the justice of heaven against them, as being too strong for all human control, too big for reproof, and fit only to upbraid the means of grace by their incorrigible impenitence under them.

This loud and grievous complaint of his prophet God answers with the denunciation of a severe judgment against the persons complained of, by bringing in upon them an army of the Chaldeans, "that hasty and bitter nation," as they are styled in the sixth verse of the first chapter, persons that should act all the insolencies upon them, that victory in conjunction with ill-nature could prompt them to: men whose hearts were flint, and their bowels brass; who knew not what it was to pity or relent, but were utter strangers to humanity, and incapable of showing compassion: but upon all these accounts so much the fitter to be instrumental to the divine vengeance, now inflamed against them, and to surpass, if possible, the severity of the sentence by the fierceness of the execution. Which dreadful answer of God is so far from satisfying the prophet's complaint, that it only exasperates his grief, and provokes him to another, in which he expostulates with God the method of this his judgment, that he should punish the wickedness of his people by persons so much viler and wickeder than themselves; that vice should be employed to punish sin, and that his church should be chastised, and, if you

will, reformed, by persons notable for nothing but blood and rapine, luxury and idolatry.

To this complaint also God is pleased to rejoin, and to clear the justice, equity, and reason of his proceeding, by showing that it was not to be rated by the qualification of the instruments made use of in it; which instruments he would be sure to account with when they had done his work; and that as he designed his people for the rod, so he designed the rod itself for the fire. He assures his prophet, and with him all pious and humble persons, who could lift their faith above their sense, that as Nebuchadnezzar and his army were not for any worth or piety in themselves suffered to captivate and trample upon God's people, and to make havoc of and vent their rage against the church; so that they themselves should infallibly have their turns in the course and circulation of divine justice, and be strictly reckoned with for their intolerable pride, their insatiable avarice, and their unhuman and remorseless cruelty, shown in the spoil and waste they had made upon all nations round about them for the propagation of their empire, which they were still enlarging as their desires, and their desires as hell, as it is expressed in the fifth verse of the second chapter; for all this, I say, the prophet is assured that these victorious sons of Belial should pay severely, when God should think fit to rebuild Jerusalem upon the ruins of Babylon; and to convince the proud and the cruel, that he neither loves nor values his scourge, though he is sometimes constrained to use it.

The words of the text contain in them a woe or curse, denounced personally and directly against the great head of the Chaldean empire Nebuchadnezzar, but by consequence against the whole empire itself. The curse is both for the ground, object, and measures of it considerable. And therefore I shall cast the prosecution of the words into these five particulars.

I. I shall show the ground or cause of this curse, which the text declares to be that justly abhorred sin of blood-guiltiness.

II. I shall show the condition of the person against whom this curse was denounced. He was such a one as had actually set up and established a government by blood.

III. I shall show the latitude and extent of the curse, and what is comprehended in it.

IV. I shall show the reasons why a curse or woe is so peculiarly denounced against this sin.

V. And lastly, I shall apply all briefly to the present sad occasion.

I. And first for *the ground and cause of the curse here denounced*, which was the crying, crimson sin of bloodshed; a sin, in the hatred and detestation of which heaven and earth seem to strive for the mastery. The first great disturbance in the world after



the fall of man was by a murderer; whom the vengeance of God pursued to that degree, that he professed that "his punishment was greater than he could bear," though he himself could not say, that it was greater than he had deserved. Accordingly in all succeeding generations it has still been the care of Providence, both by civil and religious means, to extinguish all principles of savageness in the minds of men, and to make friendship and tenderness over men's lives a great part of religion. But by nothing has this been so highly endeavoured as by the rules and constitution of Christianity, the last and noblest revelation that God has made of his mind and will to the sons of men. In which all acts of fierceness, violence, and barbarity are so strictly provided against, that there are few injuries in which patience and sufferance are not recommended instead of the most just and reasonable pretensions to revenge: nay, and so very tender is it of men's lives, that it secures them against the very first approaches and preparations to murder, by dashing even angry thoughts, and denouncing damnation to vilifying, provoking words: so that we have both law and gospel equally rising up against this monstrous sin: and the sentence of both confirmed by the eternal voice of reason speaking in the law of nations: and so all passing this concurrent judgment, that whosoever sheds man's blood, ought by man to have his blood shed. A judgment made up of all the justice and equity that it is possible for reason and religion to infuse into a law.

But now the execution of this law being upon no grounds of reason to be committed to every private hand, God has found it necessary to deposite it only in the hands of his vicegerents, whom he entrusts and deposes as his lieutenants in the government and protection of the several societies of mankind; and so both to ennoble and guard their sceptres, by appropriating to the same hands the use of the sword of justice too. From which it follows, that the law has not the same aspect upon sovereign princes, that it has upon the rest of men; nor that the sword can, by any mortal power, be authorized against the life of him to whom the sole use of it is by divine right ascribed. Upon which account, if it so fall out that a prince invades either the estate or life of a subject, that law, that draws the sword of justice upon the life of any private person doing the same things, has no power or efficacy at all to do the same execution upon the supreme magistrate, whose supremacy, allowing him neither equal nor superior, renders all legal acts of punishment or coercion upon him (the nature of which is still to descend) utterly impossible.

But what! does God then approve, or at least connive at those wicked actions in princes, that he so severely takes revenge of in others? No, certainly, the guilt is the same in both, and under an equal abhorrence with God, and shall equally be accounted

for; but the difference is this, that while God punishes inferior malefactors by the hands of princes, he takes the punishment of princes wholly into his own: and surely no guilty person is like to speed at all the better for having his cause brought before him who has an infinite wisdom to search into, and an infinite power to revenge his guilt. It is God's prerogative to be the sole judge of princes, and heaven only is that high court of justice, where kings can be legally arraigned, tried, and condemned. God has woes enough in store to humble the highest and the proudest tyrant, without needing the assistance of any of his rebel subjects; and therefore such courses for the curbing or pulling down of princes is neither the cause of God nor the defence of religion, but the doctrine of devils, and the dictates of that which in the judgment of God himself is worse than witchcraft. For be a king never so savage, bloody, or unjust, he is, under all these respects, to be looked upon as a plague or a punishment sent by God upon the people, whose duty I am sure is to submit, be the punishment what it will. And however, that nation is like to find but a strange recovery, be its distemper what it will, if its cure must be a rebellion.

II. The second thing to be considered is, *the condition of the person against whom this woe or curse is denounced.* He was such a one as had actually established a government and built a city with blood. We know that as soon as Cain had murdered his brother, he presently betook himself to the building of a city. And so indeed it falls out, that bloodiness has usually a connexion with building, and that upon some ground of reason: forasmuch as men, by shedding of blood, are enabled to build cities, and set up governments; and then because such cities being once built, and governments set up, do secure the shedders of blood from the vengeance due to their sin. The person here spoken of I am sure eminently served his turn by his cruelty and bloodiness in both these respects, as having thereby reared, or at least hugely augmented the most magnificent city that ever was; even Babylon, the stupendous metropolis of the eastern monarchy, then the governess of the world: a city so strong and great, that it might well promise its builder sufficient defence against any mortal power, that should presume to call him to account for any of those slaughters and depredations, by which he had been enabled thus to build it. So that it is not for nothing, that the prophet here expresses the whole Chaldean monarchy by this city, which was of such incredible strength, glory, and vast dimensions, that it might well pass for one of the wonders of the world, and render it almost doubtful whether Babylon should be accounted in the Chaldean empire, or the Chaldean empire be said to be in Babylon. The account the world has had of the Assyrian monarchy, the first and greatest

of all the four, is indeed but small and imperfect ; but so far as the scattered fragments of antiquity have been able to inform us, we may guess at the unparalleled greatness of the structure, by the magnificence of its remains. For if we consider the spaciousness of this city of Babylon, it is reported to have been about four hundred and fifty-eight of our English miles in circuit : yea, so exceeding wide and ample was it, that three days after it was taken, one part of the city knew nothing of what had befallen the other. The wall that encompassed it was two hundred cubits high, and so thick withal that two coaches might meet upon the breadth of it. It opened itself at a hundred gates, and those all of brass ; which whole wall was the work of Nebuchadnezzar, though falsely ascribed to Semiramis. Add to all this, the *horti pensiles*, art's miraculous emulation of nature, that is, vast gardens and woods planted upon the battlements of towers, and bearing trees fifty foot in height ; such prodigious instances of the grandeur of this city have the most authentic historians, both Greek and Latin, transmitted to us. So that Nebuchadnezzar might well vaunt himself, upon the survey of such a mighty structure, as in Daniel iv. 29, 30, we find that he does to some purpose ; where we have him walking in the palace of his kingdom, and thus braving it to himself : "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of my kingdom, and by the might of my power ?" Words that sufficiently declare the speaker of them to have little regarded either God or man. And surely while he uttered them, he thought himself in a condition rather to rival and defy heaven, than to fear it, and far above the reach of all woes or curses.

But when God shall send a curse, it shall go with a vengeance, and make its way into the very heart of Babylon, climb its high walls, and break through its brass gates, and drive the tyrant with these very words in his mouth from his throne and all his imperial glories, to herd it with the beasts of the field, till a better mind should fit him for a better condition. For it is worth our observing, that God takes a peculiar delight to surprise and seize upon a great guilt in the height of its pride and bravery, and in the very midst of all its strengths and presumed securities. He delights to commission his curse to arrest a bloody Ahab, just as he is going to take possession of the price of blood, and to dash out the brains of a murderous Abimelech in the very head of his army. These are the triumphs of judgment, and the glorious trophies of blood-revenging justice.

III. The third thing proposed was, *to show the latitude and extent of this woe or curse, and what is comprehended in it.* Concerning which there is no doubt but it includes the miseries of both worlds, present and future. And if we go no further than the present, it is grievous enough, and made up of these following ingredients :

1. That it fastens a general hatred and detestation upon such men's persons. For cruelty and bloodiness, armed with power, is the proper motive and the dreadful object of men's fears; and fear and hatred usually keep company; it being very hard, if not impossible, to assign that person, who has not the same share and proportion in men's hatred, that he has in their fears. Every man flies from such a one, as from a public ruin, or a walking calamity, who, which way soever he turns himself, both looks and brings certain desolation. He converses amongst the living as an enemy to men's lives: as a sword or a dagger, which the nearer it comes, the more dangerous it is.

Cruelty alarms and calls up all the passions of human nature, and puts them into a posture of hostility and defiance. Every heart swells against a tyrant, as against a common enemy of mankind, and blood rises at the sight of blood; and certainly it is none of the least of miseries for a man to be justly hated; for though it be tied up and restrained from its utmost effects, yet the very breathings of it are malignant, the silent grudgings and glancings of it are ominous and fatal. A great part of the happiness of this life is, to enjoy a free and amicable converse with such as live about us; and therefore an ingenuous nature cannot but account it a real plague, to see a cloud in every countenance he beholds; to observe the black and lowering aspects of a reserved malice, and, as it were, to read his doom in every face, and to gather his fortune from another's forehead.

Who so hated as Cain, Nebuchadnezzar, Saul, Herod, and such other bloodsuckers? All the glory of their power and magnificence was smothered in the hatred of their cruelty, deriving a just hatred upon their persons; for it is the concernment of mankind, and of humanity itself, to abhor such destroyers. He that shows the power he has over men's lives only by taking them away, must not think to command or reign over their affections. Neither is this hatred without an equal scorn; for the same temper that is cruel is also sordid and degenerate, and consequently as fit an object for contempt. What so cruel, and withal so base, as a wolf? But on the other side, true worth and fortitude is never bloody. Gold, the noblest of metals, is healing and restorative; and it is only iron, the vilest, with which we wound and destroy.

Let this therefore be the first ingredient of the woe discharged against the tyrant and bloody person, to be universally hated and scorned; to go no whither, but with a retinue of curses at his heels; to be murdered in the wishes, and assassinated in the very looks of his subjects. He who is a monster, and an exception from human nature, may perhaps count this nothing, and say, with Lucius Sylla, the murdering, proscribing dictator of Rome, *Oderint dum metuant*; but he that is sensible that man was born for society, that is, to love and to be loved, must in this case look

upon himself as an outlaw and an exile from the converse, and consequently from the felicity and proper enjoyments of mankind.

2. The second ingredient of the woe here denounced against bloody persons is, the torment of continual jealousy and suspicion. He that is injurious is naturally suspicious; and he that knows that he deserves enemies, will always suppose that he has them, and perhaps at length by suspecting come to make them so. But now, is it not the height of misery thus like a wild beast still to fear and to be feared? for the mind to be perpetually struggling with its own surmises, and first to create torments, and then to feel them? The breast of a tyrant is like a sea, it swallows up and devours others, and is still restless, troubled, and unquiet in itself. Could Herod the Great be more poorly and basely unhappy, than to be afraid of poor sucking infants, and not to think himself safe in the throne, unless he stormed nurseries and invaded cradles? A kingdom can be desirable upon no other account, but because it seems to command more of the materials of happiness, and to afford greater opportunities of satisfaction to the desires of a rational nature, than can possibly be had in any inferior condition. But now what real happiness can that prince or great man find, that has his mind depraved into such a jealous, suspicious temper? What can all the enjoyments of a court or kingdom profit, when the tormentor within shall embitter them all, and the paleness of fear and death sit perpetually upon his heart? What pleasure can it afford to cast roses into that bosom, that feels the gnawings of the wolf? And therefore if the tyrant is brought to this pass, as to feel the reflections of his tyranny over others in that which his own jealousy exercises upon himself, and if his own thoughts plot and conspire against him, his very diadem is but a splendid mockery, his throne a rack, and all his royalty nothing else but a great and magnificent misery.

3. The third ingredient denounced against him that endeavours to raise and settle a government with blood is, the shortness and certain dissolution of the government that he endeavours so to establish. There is no way by which God so usually punishes villanous designs, as the disappointment of them, by those very methods and instruments by which they were to have been accomplished. It is, as I may so say, the great sport of Providence, to ruin unjust titles and usurped government by their very supports. But of all the means employed by tyrants for this purpose, there is none so frequently made use of, though none so often proves fatal to the user, as this of savageness and cruelty; innocent blood always proving but a bad cement to build the walls of a city with. For how do such governments pass the world like so many furious blasts of wind, violent and short! as it were out of breath and expiring with their own violence. How do

tyrants, having by much blood and rapine advanced themselves to the sovereign power of a kingdom, like so many fatal comets shine and blaze, and fright the world below them, in those upper regions for a while, but still portend their own downfall and destruction! For was it not thus with those traitorous captains of Israel, who kinged themselves by slaying their masters and reigning in their stead? How quickly was their usurped government at an end! How soon did they meet with others, who did the like for them! Had Zimri peace, who slew his master? Such governments quickly fall and moulder away, like clods dissolved with blood.

Was it not thus also with Cinna and Marius, and afterwards with Sylla himself, who had nothing of Dictator Perpetuus but the name?

How soon was the family of bloody Saul extinct! And for Herod the Great, did not the same cruelty, for which he deserved to be childless, almost make him so? Archelaus, the only son he left, succeeding but to part of his kingdom, and that too but for a short time. And when afterwards Herod Antipas the tetrarch was routed and lost all his army in a war with Aretas king of Arabia; and when by the subtlety of Agrippa he was outwitted and outed of all, and also banished, Josephus himself says, that even the Jews ascribed all this to a divine vengeance upon him for the barbarous and unjust murder of John the Baptist.

And for the Jews themselves, does not Christ, in the very same place in which he foretells the ruin and destruction of Jerusalem, upbraid that bloody city with her "killing God's prophets, and stoning those that were sent unto her?"

And lastly, whereas the high-priest counselled the putting of Christ to death, lest otherwise the Romans should come upon them, and destroy both their nation and government; is it not evident to any one not obstinately blind, that the very guilt of his blood brought that destruction upon them from the Romans, who not long after sacked their city, burnt the temple, killed, crucified, sold, and dispersed the inhabitants; that is, used them as they had used Christ, till at length they took away both their place and nation? "Woe to the bloody city," says the prophet, in Ezek. xxiv. 6.

The sin of blood is a destroying, wasting, murdering sin; murdering others, besides those whom it kills; it breaks the back of governments, sinks families, destroys for the future, reaches into successions, and cuts off posterities.

4. The fourth ingredient of the woe here denounced against the bloody builders of governments, is the sad and dismal end that usually attends such persons. He that delights to swim in blood is for the most part at length drowned in it; and there is a kind of fatal circulation by which blood frequently wheels about and returns upon the shedder of it. How did Cyrus the

Persian verify this by a peculiar significance of death, having his head cut off and thrown into a tub of blood! How did the fratricide Romulus die, being torn in pieces by the senate! How did Sylla expire in a murdering fit, causing one to be strangled before him in his chamber, and with that passion so disturbing himself, and enraging his distemper, that within a few hours he breathed out his own bloody soul! And, to come to the sacred story, how did Samuel treat Agag? "As thy sword has made many childless, so shall thy mother be childless amongst women." And then for Herod the Great, who so barbarously murdered those poor innocents; he died indeed in his bed, as well as our late grand regicide; but with so much horror and disaster, that for some days before he died he snatched at a knife, to have murdered, or rather to have killed himself; and so to have done that, which only wanted another and a higher hand, to have made it a just execution. But upon none did the revenging hand of divine justice appear more signally than upon Herod Agrippa, mentioned in the twelfth of the Acts; who, to please the Jews, and thereby to confirm himself in his kingdom, having slain James, the brother of John, with the sword, proceeded to take Peter also. But we read in what terrible strange manner, even in the height of his pride and glory, he was smote by God, infested with worms, and made a living carcass; thus anticipating the effects of death, and suffering the curse of the grave, before he descended into the ground.

Should I endeavour to give a full rehearsal of all such like instances, I must transcribe the stories of all times, which are scarce fuller of pages, than of examples of this kind. Blood seldom escapes revenge, since it is so easily followed and found out by its own traces. And thus much for the third thing proposed; which was, to show the latitude and extent of the curse or woe here denounced against bloody persons, and the several plagues comprehended in it. I come now to the fourth particular, which is,

IV. To show *the reasons why a curse or woe is so peculiarly denounced against this sin*. Many may be assigned, but I shall produce only these:

1. The first is, because the sin of bloodshed makes the most direct breach upon human society, of which the providence of God owns the peculiar care and protection. Concerning which we must observe, that every man has naturally a right to enjoy such things as are suitable to, and required by the rational appetites of his nature; in the due and lawful satisfaction of which properly consists his well-being in this world, which is every man's birthright by an irrevocable charter from God and nature. For whosoever is born, has a right to live; and whosoever has a right to live, has a right also to live well. Now that men might

the better secure both their lives or being, and withal compass such lawful satisfactions to themselves, as should be requisite to their well-being, they first entered into society, and then, to preserve society, put themselves under government. So that the end of society is a man's enjoyment of himself, and the end of government is society. For in the first and most natural intention of it, no governor, merely as such, is made absolute lord of the lives or proprietor of the estates of those whom he governs, but only a trustee by God to secure them in the free possession and enjoyment of both. And therefore that governor that wrings away a man's estate, or destroys his life, not yet forfeited to the community he lives in by any crime, is in God's account a thief and a murderer, and so shall hereafter be dealt with by him as such; though in the mean time, as I said before, neither reason nor religion can authorize the subjects to revenge these injuries upon their governor.

From whence we learn the reason why God so much concerns himself to punish the unjust shedder of blood; first, because he is the great trespasser upon human society, by being destructive to the lives of men; and next, because if he who is so, chances to be a sovereign prince, there is no provision in the ordinary course of human justice to call such a destroyer to account.

As for the life of man, it is an enjoyment in comparison of which nature scarce values all others; this is the very apple of his eye, sensible of the least touch, and irrecoverable after the first loss. For if a man loses his estate, he may get another, and if he loses his reputation, he may perhaps recover it; or if he cannot, he may live without it, not very happily indeed, but yet he may live. But if the tyrant takes away his life, there is no retrieving of that; this sweeps away being and well-being at one blow; the dying man parts with all at one breath, and is but one remove from annihilation; not so much as his very thoughts remaining, but they also perish, Psalm cxlvi. 4. And now when a tyrant by shedding blood has provoked civil justice, and by shedding so much has put himself beyond the reach of it, does not the matter itself seem to appeal to a superior Providence; to invoke the justice of heaven to make bare its arm in the behalf of injured and oppressed right?

Blood certainly shall not go unrevenged, though it be the greatest Herod that sheds it, and the meanest infant that loses it; though whole parliaments and armies shall conspire against the life of the innocent and the helpless. Briefly, it belongs to God, as the supreme governor of the world, to revenge such grand and unnatural violations of the societies of mankind, committed to the tuition of his providence.

2. The second reason why God so peculiarly denounces a woe against the sin of bloodiness, is not only for the malignity of the sin itself, but also for the malignity of those sins that almost al-



ways go in conjunction with it, particularly for the abhorred sins of fraud, deceitfulness, and hypocrisy. The two great things that make such a breach upon the peace and settlement of the world are force and fraud. For all men that are miserable become so either by being driven or cheated out of their enjoyments. Hence the Spirit of God, in Psalm lv. 25, joins the bloody and deceitful man together. And does not Christ himself call Herod, that murdered John the Baptist, "fox;" a beast notable for his craft, as well as for sucking of blood?

If we look into history, we shall scarce find any one remarkably cruel, who was not also noted for his dissimulation. But we need not much trouble histories; for has not all the bloodshed amongst us, from the blood of the prince to that of the peasant, issued from the most devout pretences of reformation? Has not the nation been massacred by sanctified murderers, who came into the field masked with covenants and protestations, quoting scripture while they cut throats, and singing psalms while they plundered towns; destroying their prince's armies and shooting at his person, while in the mean time they swore that they fought for him?

But this way and method of proceeding is but natural. For men must be first deceived out of their guards and defences, before they can be exposed to the utmost violences. The bird must be caught in the snare, and the fish beguiled with the bait, before they can be killed.

But now there is scarce any thing that God hates more thoroughly, and punishes more severely, than deceit and falseness: for it is most properly a defiance of God; who is always either solemnly invoved, or at least tacitly supposed, for the great witness of the sincerity of men's dealings: and if men use not truth in these, the great bond of converse is dissolved. No wonder therefore if bloodiness draw after it such a woe, having always such a sin in its company, and if the curse falls heavy, being procured by two of the greatest sins in the closest conjunction.

And thus much for the fourth particular, which was to show the several ingredients contained within the compass or latitude of the curse or woe here denounced. I descend now to,

V. The fifth and last, which is, *to apply all to this present occasion*. I show at the beginning, that ever since the creation of mankind, God has all along manifested such a solicitous care for the lives of men, the noblest of all his creatures, that he has not secured them only by severe laws established against murder, but also by making kindness, mercy, and benevolence a great part of religion; and of all other religions, has he chiefly woven these excellent and benign qualities into the very heart and vital constitution of Christianity. By how much the more detestable, and for ever accursed, must those miscreants appear, who have

slurred and bespattered the best, the purest, and most peaceable of all religions, by entitling it to all the rapines they have acted, and all the blood they have imbrued their hands in, as shed by the immediate impulse of God's Spirit, and for the defence and preservation of religion! How much this nation has been concerned in this black charge, we need no other argument than this fatal day to convince us; on which was acted the most disloyal, barbarous, and inhuman piece of villany, and that with all the solemn disguises of piety and religion, that mortal men were ever yet guilty of, since there was such a thing as sovereignty acknowledged, or such a thing as religion professed upon the face of the earth.

But to show further how close and home the subject-matter of the text comes to the business of this annual solemnity, we will survey the correspondence that is between them, as to the three main things contained in the words. The first was a charge of unjust effusion of blood. The second was the end or design for which it was shed, namely, the setting up of a government. And the third and last was a woe or curse denounced against the person that endeavours to establish himself by such a course.

As for the first, we must know, that all unjust bloodshed is twofold. 1. Either, public, and acted by and upon a community, as in war. Or, 2. Personal, in the assassination of any particular man.

1. As for that which is public; it is as certain, that he who takes away a man's life in a war, commenced upon an unjust cause, and without just authority, is as truly a murderer, as he that enters his neighbour's house, and there stabs him within his own walls. And as for the late war, upon the account of all laws both of God and man, whether we respect the cause for which it was raised, which was, the removal of grievances, where there were none, or the persons that carried it on, who were subjects armed against their prince, it was in all the parts and circumstances of it a perfect, open, and most barefaced rebellion. For not all the Calvins, Bezas, Knoxes, Buchanans, or Paræus's in Christendom, with all their principles of anarchy and democracy, so studiously maintained in their respective writings, can by any solid reason make out the lawfulness of subjects taking arms against their prince. For if government be the effect and product of reason, it is impossible for disobedience to found itself upon reason: and therefore our rebels found it necessary to balk and decry this, and to fetch a warrant for all their villainies from ecstasy and inspiration. But besides, if we translate the whole matter from the merit of the cause to that of the person, no people under heaven had less ground to complain of, much less to fight against their prince, than the English then had, who at that time swimm'd in a full enjoyment of all things but a thankful

mind; no prince's reign having ever put subjects into a condition so like that of princes, as the peaceable part of the reign of king Charles the First; which indeed was the true cause that made them kick at those breasts that fed them, and strike at that royal oak under whose shadow they enjoyed so much ease, plenty, and prosperity.

2. The other sort of unjust bloodshed is, the assassination of particular persons: and had not our bloodsuckers their slaughter-houses and courts of mock justice, as well as the high places of the field, to act their butcheries upon? Strafford and Canterbury lead the way, both as forerunners of, and introductions to the shedding of a more sacred blood, the stain of which will dye the English calendar for ever, and the cry of which sober persons much fear continues still, and rings aloud in heaven, whatsoever arts have been used, and still are, to silence it here on earth. For it was the blood of one, who had those two things eminently in conjunction, either of which alone should be a sufficient safeguard to the life of him that has them, to wit, innocence and sovereignty. For innocence ought to protect the life of the meanest subject, and sovereignty to secure the person of the highest criminal. But we scorn that word when we speak of this blessed martyr, whose virtues were larger than his dominions, and will make his enemies more infamous than their own vices.

Blood therefore we see has been shed amongst us to some purpose: the first thing in which the text is answered by the business of this day.

The second was, the end or design for which the blood here spoken of was shed, namely, the erecting or setting up of a government. And was not the very same thing driven at by all our pious murderers? For out of the ruins of a glorious church and monarchy, and all those slaughtered heaps of men sacrificed to the cause of loyalty on one side, and of rebellion on the other, did there not at length rise up a misshapen monstrous beast, with many heads, called a commonwealth; a pack of insolent, beggarly tyrants, who lorded it as long as they were able, till at length they were forced to surrender and pass over all their usurped power into the hands of their great Beelzebub, the prime rebel and regicide, by whom they had done all their mighty works? And so their commonwealth wheeled about again into a monarchy. All those rivulets of tyranny, as it were, emptying and discharging themselves into that great gulf or dead sea of all baseness, cruelty, and hypocrisy: a fellow that had torn and trampled upon all those obligations, either civil or sacred, by which human society does subsist; who by abusing religion, breaking oaths, mocking of God, and murdering his prince, at length grasped the sovereign power of these three kingdoms, and then called himself their protector, with the same truth and propriety that a wolf or a bear may be said to protect the flocks they worry and tear in pieces.

So then the parallel we see holds good thus far; that our villains reared themselves a government by the blood they shed, as well as those mentioned by the prophet in the text.

And now, in the third and last place, have they not, think we, also as full a right and title to the woe and curse there denounced in the same words? Yes, assuredly; there being no persons, under heaven that more deserved to drink off the very dregs of God's vengeance, and to empty all his quivers, than these monsters did.

As for the curse that befell these bloody builders of government, I show, that it manifested itself eminently in two respects.

1. In the shortness of the government so set up. And was it long that these murderers of their prince possessed the government they so usurped? Within five years their infant commonwealth expired; and in five years more Cromwell's mushroom monarchy was at an end, in spite of all the prophecies of those impostors, that would lengthen out his life and government out of Daniel and the Revelations, telling him, that there was thirty years' more generation-work (as they canted it) cut out for him; and that it was contrary to the methods of Providence, having raised up such an extraordinary instrument, to lay him aside, till he had finished his work. But God, who understood his own counsels better than such saucy interpreters, knew that this wretch had disturbed the world too long already; and so in his good time sent him to his own place.

2. Another part of the curse attending the bloody raisers of government, was the general hatred that always follows such persons. And of this I think our usurpers had as large a portion as ever light upon the heads of mortal men. For in the most flourishing estate of all their greatness they were encompassed with curses as well as armies; men being scarce able to keep down the inward boilings of revenge, and to restrain their tongues and hands from ministering to that fulness of hatred that swelled within their hearts. Men hated them even in the behalf of human nature, and for the vindication of common humanity. And still so much and so justly abhorred are they, that all the pardons and indulgences, all the good words, all the great offices and preferments, that can be bestowed upon them, will never be able to sweeten their memory, nor rescue them from the detestation of all sober persons and true lovers of their country. And the truth is, to speak the severest words of these vipers, is not, as some call it, a sacrificing to any personal heat or private revenge; but a real serving of the public interest of society, and the doing an act of mere charity to the innocent and to posterity, who, by hearing with what abhorrence such miscreants are mentioned, will dread the imitation of those villainies, that have derived such an odium and infamy upon the actors of them. Nor can I think that any one can concern himself against the ripping

up of the baseness of the king's murderers, even in the harshest, that is, the most proper terms, but such as have been either the relations, officers, or servants of that grand regicide, and consequently, whose unlimited puritan consciences will equally serve them to act and thrive under any government whatsoever.

But it is well that there is a punishment for villains in the general hatred of mankind; and this is the lot, this the punishment of our rebels: but as for any other penalties, that use to descend upon traitors and murderers from the hand of human vengeance, these they have for the most part escaped, as having rebelled under a lucky star, which has prospered their villainies and secured their persons in this world, till the great Judge of all things shall recognize the cause of abused majesty and religion in another, and there award such a sentence upon the violators of them, as shall demonstrate to men and angels, that verily God is righteous: "doubtless there is a God that judgeth the world."

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion both now and for evermore Amen.

## SERMON XXV.

THE DESIGN OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION.

1 JOHN III. 8.

*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

THERE is nothing that contributes so much to the right understanding of the nature of any thing or action, as a true notion of the proper end and design of it; the ignorance of which bereaves mankind of many of the blessings of heaven; because oftentimes while they enjoy the thing, they yet mistake its use; and so pervert the intentions of mercy, and become miserable amidst the very means of happiness. Certainly therefore it concerns men infinitely, not to entertain an error about the greatest of God's favours, and the very masterpiece of his goodness, the sending of his Son into the world. The meaning of which providence, should we misconstrue, we should frustrate our grand and last remedy, and perish, not for want, but for misapplication of the means of life. Wherefore this divine apostle, who had been honoured with so near an admittance into his master's mind, and lain so familiarly in the bosom of truth, endeavours to give the world a right information about this so great and concerning affair in this chapter, and particularly in these words; in which we have these two parts.

I. An account of Christ's coming into the world, in this expression; "The Son of God was manifested."

II. The end and design of his coming; which was to "destroy the works of the devil."

I. As for the first of these, *the manifestation of the Son of God*, though it principally relates to the actual coming of Christ into the world, according to my application of it to the present purpose, yet it is a term of a larger comprehension; and so ought to carry our notice both to passages before and after his nativity. For as in the coming of a prince, or great person, to any place, the pomp of harbingers and messengers is, as it were, some appearance of him before he is seen; so Christ declared himself at vast distances of time, by many semblances and intimations, enough to raise, though not to satisfy the world's expectation.

We shall find him first exhibited in promises, and those as early as the first need of a Saviour, even immediately after the fall; by such a hasty provision of mercy, that there might be no

dark interval between man's misery and his hope of recovery; Gen. iii. 15, "The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head." He was afterwards further shadowed out in types and sacrifices, and such other emblems and arts of signification; still with this method of proceeding, that the manifestation brightened and grew greater and greater, according to the nearer and nearer approach of the full discovery.

He that at first was known only as the seed of the woman, was in process of time known to be the seed of Abraham, Gen. xxii. 18. And after that, the seed of David, in Isaiah xi. 1. And from thence proceeding to greater particularities relating to the manner of his coming, he was known to be born of a virgin, Isaiah vii. 14. And for the place where; to be born at Bethlehem, Micah v. 2. And for his person and condition, that he should be "a man of sorrows," Isaiah liii. 3. And that he should suffer and die for sin, ver. 8. That he should rise again, Psalm xvi. 10. That he should ascend into heaven, and lead captivity captive, &c., Psalm lxviii. 18. That he should reign till he had subdued his enemies, and saw the world brought under him, Psalm cx. 1. Thus by a continual gradation the promise advanced itself with further steps and increases, "shining more and more unto a perfect day;" displaying fresh and fuller discoveries through the several ages of the world; every new degree of manifestation being a mercy great enough to oblige an age.

But when at length prophecy ripened into event, and shadows gave way upon the actual appearance of the substance, in the birth of Christ, yet then, though the Son of God could be but once born, he ceased not to be frequently manifested: there was a choir of angels to proclaim his nativity, and a new star to be his herald; the wise men of the east came to worship a new sun, where they saw and acknowledged the first miracle of his birth, a star appearing when the sun was up. When he disputed with the doctors, every argument was a demonstration of his deity; and during the whole course of his ministry, all the mighty works he did were further manifestations of a divine nature wrapped up in the flesh; even his death proved that there was something in him that could not die; and the very effects of mortality, by a strange antiperistasis, declared him to be immortal, 1 Pet. iii. 18, "Put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." And lastly, after all this, the perfection and height of evidence shone forth in the stupendous passage of his resurrection; in which, according to the apostle Paul's phrase, Rom. i. 4, he was "declared to be the Son of God with power." God made it his business to show him publicly, to hold him up to be seen, admired, and believed in. Every thing that concerned him was writ in capital letters, and such as might not only entertain, but help the sight.

Now upon the strength of this consideration it is, that we pronounce the Jews inexcusable for persisting in their unbelief. Concerning which as we are to observe, that in order to the convincing of men's belief, it is not only required that the proposition, proposed to be believed, be in itself true, but that it also appear such ; so Christ, to comply with the strictest methods of human reason, asserted his being the Son of God with such invincible arguments, that he was "manifested" to be so ; yea, and to that degree, that the Jews' rejection of him is not stated upon ignorance, or the cause of it want of evidence in the thing that they were to know ; but upon the malice and depravation of their wills acting counter to their knowledge, in John xv. 24: "If I had not done amongst them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin : but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." It was not a blind hatred ; they saw well enough what they did ; they had an open, as well as an evil eye ; a resolved obstinacy to outlook the sun, and outstare the light.

For so was Christ, he was the light of the world ; and nothing is more manifest or visible than that which manifests both itself and all things else ; and needs no invitation to the eye, but will certainly enter, unless it be forcibly kept out. But they were purposed not to believe their eyes ; to question whether it was day when the sun shined ; to doubt whether he that did the works of God was sent by God ; whether miracles could prove any thing, or signs could signify ; and lastly, whether he that fulfilled all prophecies was intended by them. It is clear therefore, that the Jews rejected the Son of God, not because he was not manifested, but because they delighted to be ignorant, and to be sceptics and unbelievers even in spite of evidence.

And thus much for the first thing, the manifestation of the Son of God.

II. Pass we now to the next, which is, *the end of his manifestation*, "that he might destroy the works of the devil." In the prosecution of which I shall first show, 1. What were those works of the devil that the Son of God destroyed : and 2. The means and ways by which he destroyed them.

1. For the first of these. I reduce the works of the devil, destroyed by the manifestation of the Son of God, to these three ; 1. Delusion. 2. Sin. 3. Death. There is a natural coherence and concatenation between these : for sin being a voluntary action, and so the issue of the will, presupposes a default in the understanding, which was to conduct the will in its choices : and then when the delusion and inadvertency of the understanding has betrayed the will to sin, the consequent and effect of sin is death. Christ therefore, that came to repair the breaches, and cure the miseries of human nature, and to redeem it from that frenzy into



which it had cast itself, designs the removal and conquest of all these three.

(1.) And first for delusion. The devil, as his masterpiece and first art of ruining mankind, was busy to sow the seeds of error and fallacy in the guide of action, their understanding. And surely he has not gained higher trophies over any faculty of man's nature than this. For where, upon the survey of the world lying under Gentilism, can we find truth even in principles of speculation, but much less in those of practice?

As for the first fundamental thing, the original of nature and the beginning of the world; what dissonant and various opinions may we find, and consonant in nothing but their absurdity! Some will not allow it to have had any beginning; others refer it to accident. And those who acknowledge it to have been efficiently framed and produced by an infinite eternal mind, yet assert the matter and rude chaos out of which he framed it, to have been as old, or rather as eternal as the artificer. Thus ridiculously making two eternals, and one of them infinitely imperfect; whereas the very notion of eternity and self-existence, pursued into its due consequences, must of necessity infer an infinite perfection in all other respects whatsoever. For all imperfection and finiteness proceeds from the restraint of a superior cause; and what cause could limit that which had no cause; and keep that which had its being from itself, from having all the perfections of being?

And for the principles of practice they were equally ridiculous and uncertain. Some fixed the chief good of man in pleasure, some in contemplation, and some thrust the means into the place of the end, and made the chief good of man to act virtuously; whereas indeed the chief good was to enjoy God, and the way to attain it was to act virtuously. And then if you would know what they understood by acting virtuously, you would find them stating the rates of virtue so, that many actions were taken into that number, which we account vicious and unwarrantable. Ambition was an excellent thing amongst them, and an insatiable desire of honour a current virtue. Lust, if it did not proceed to adultery, that is, to a downright act of injustice, was accounted a very innocent and allowable recreation. In a word, they were at an infinite loss where to state the ground and reason of men's actions, and all their practical maxims were deficient at least, if not unjust.

And for those that acknowledged God for the end of all that they were to do, yet did they pursue the enjoyment of that end by means any ways suitable or proportionable to it? Did they worship him as God? No, we know that "they waxed vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened:" they changed the glory of the eternal, all-wise, incorruptible God, into the images of silly, sinful, mortal men; nay, and what is

yet more incredible and intolerable, into the similitude of beasts, and fowls, and creeping things. All this time worshipping the works of their own hands, or at least using them as instruments of worship and proper conveyances of divine adoration to God himself, held forth to them by such ways of representation; which was a great absurdity in reason, a great impiety in religion, and a horrible injury and affront to the Deity; for could any thing be more injurious, than that men should take their notions of God from such resemblances; and then depress their religious worship of him to the proportion of those notions?

Now all this was done by the wisest of the heathens, by the philosophers, the sages, the governors and teachers of the rest of the world; and if these could so degenerate and ride down their reason to such a strange weakness and deception, what can we think of the rout and the vulgar, who could not salve their idolatry with art and distinction? They certainly were in outer darkness, in such thick "darkness as might be felt." Their priests' images were their realities; and what they saw with their eyes they worshipped with their heart, thinking of no other Deity but what shined upon them in the golden statue or the curious picture; still raising their devotion as the skill of the engraver had advanced the object.

But then, since the exercise of virtue is not to be bound upon men's consciences (at least respecting the generality of men) but by hopes and fears grounded upon the proposal of future rewards and punishments; if we look further and consider how they acquitted themselves in giving an account of these to the world, we need require no further account of the error and delusion under which the devil had sealed them. All the reward they proposed to virtue, even in its greatest austerities, self-denials, and forbearances, was to live for ever in the Elysian fields. A goodly reward indeed; a man must forego many of his pleasures, defy his clamorous appetites, and submit to many inconveniences in pursuing the *rigidum honestum*, the harshnesses of virtue: and afterwards, for all this, we shall be gratified with taking a turn now and then in a fair meadow.

And then the punishments they designed for ill lives were no ways inferior in point of unlikelihood and absurdity: as the filling of tubs full of holes, which let out the water as fast as it was poured in. The rolling of a great stone up a steep mountain, which perpetually returned back upon the person that forced it upwards. The being whipped with snakes by three furies. The being bound hand and foot upon a rock, and having one's liver gnawed by a vulture; still growing and renewing itself according as it was devoured. These and such like old wives' and old poets' fables, they amused the world withal: which could keep nobody that was witty from being wicked: all awe and dread vanishing upon the discovery of such ill-contrived cheats, such thin and transparent fallacies.

Yet this was the economy of the religion of the Gentiles before the coming of the Messiah: and for that little handful of men, that God chose from the rest of the world, to impart his law to them, the church of the Jews: even this, some time before the birth of Christ, was like an enclosed garden overrun with weeds, the very influences it lived under being noxious and pestilential. Their fountains were poisoned: their teachers were only so many authentic perverters of the law; so many doctors of heresy and immorality; abusing the authority of Moses while they sat in his chair. So that there was a kind of universal error and delusion, and that in matters of the greatest importance, spread over all nations, by that diligent, indefatigable enemy of truth and mankind, the devil. This being his groundwork to delude men's apprehensions, that so he might command their services: and so blind were their eyes, that he might lead them whither he would.

(2.) The second great work of the devil to be destroyed by the manifestation of the Son of God, was sin. It were a sad story to give a full account of this. For the truth is, the devil deceived men only for this cause, to make them sinful. And such was his cursed success in this attempt, and the vile fertility of this ill thing brought by him into the world, that it conveyed a general infection into all the faculties of man: so that at length "the thoughts of his heart were evil, and only evil, and that continually," Gen. vi. 5. It had so corrupted and fouled the world, that it put God to attempt the cleansing of it by a deluge. But neither so was the work effected; for after so many sinners were cashiered, yet sin still survived, and grew and multiplied, like a plant rather watered only than drowned; thriving and increasing as fast as those that peopled the world by a commission and command from heaven.

It would be a fearful sight to see those sins that have stained man's nature ranked into their several kinds and degrees, and displayed in their filthy colours: to see one nation branded with one vice, another nation notorious for another; and each in some degree tainted with all. St. John tells us, that "the whole world lies in wickedness," 1 John v. 19. And St. Paul gives us a large account of the vices of the Gentile world, in Rom. i., from the 26th verse to the end of the chapter. They were possessed with vile affections, acted by unnatural lusts, delivered over to a reprobate mind, "being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity," &c. And for a concluding epiphonema, it is said of them in the last verse, that "knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in those that do them." And certainly for men to take pleasure not only in their own sins, but also in the sins of other men, is the very

height and perfection of an overgrown impiety: yet thus far were they arrived. Every one delighted to see the sin of his own temper and practice exemplified, and so in a manner countenanced by another man's behaviour: to see himself transcribed, and his vice propagated into the manners of those that were about him.

And to proceed further, their vice did not only reign in their ordinary converse, but also got into their divine worship: and as before I show that they worshipped their gods idolatrously and foolishly; so their histories tell us that they worshipped them also viciously: revels, drunkenness, and lasciviousness, were the peculiar homage and religious service that they performed to them. What were their bacchanalia, but solemn debauches in honour of a drunken deity? And the rites of their *bona dea*, in which Publius Clodius was deprehended under the habit of a woman, were transacted with so much filth and villanous impurity, that they are scarce to be thought of without a trespass upon modesty. Now certainly if these courses could propitiate or please their deities, there could be no such dishonour or defiance to them, as the practices of virtue and sobriety.

We see here to what a maturity sin was grown amongst the heathens: and amongst the Jews it was not much shortened in its progress. For what are all the writings of the prophets, but so many loud declarations of the prevailing sway that sin had amongst them? How does Isaiah complain, that "the faithful city was become an harlot!" Isaiah i. 21. How does Jeremy bemoan himself, that he was constrained to dwell and converse with so much impiety in ch. ix. 2; "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them: for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men." And again, in verse 4, "Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother; for every brother will utterly supplant." It seems there was scarce truth and sincerity enough amongst them to serve the common intercourses of society and human life. The truth is, he that fully enlarges himself upon this theme must be endless and infinite, and declaim to eternity. But now when such an enormous corruption of manners had seized upon the church, to whom was committed the law of God, and the living oracles, and all the means of instruction to piety and virtue, and whatsoever was excellent; what was to be expected, but that God should either destroy or reform the world?

And therefore having pitched upon the latter, it was now full time for him to send his Son, to cleanse this Augean stable, to purge away the dross of the world; for this was the design of his coming, Mal. iii. 2, 3, "to be like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap, to purify the sons of Levi, and to purge them as gold and silver;" and if it were possible, to recover the world to its former

innocence, or at least to such a degree of it, as to break the sceptre and kingdom of the wicked one, who triumphed in the possession that he had got of men's hearts, by the sin that dwelt there, and raged in their lives.

Would we know the great purpose that brought Christ out of his Father's bosom, and clothed him with the infirmities and meannesses of our nature, and made him submit to all the indignities that an obscure birth, an indigent life, and an ignominious death could bring upon him? Why it was not through these miseries to acquire a crown, and to advance his glory; for this he had by an eternal birthright, beyond any increase or addition; and his glorification did not so much invest him with any new honour, as restore to him his old. But all this long and miraculous scene of transactions was to redeem poor mortal men from the beloved bonds and shackles of their sins, to disenslave them from the tyranny of ruling corruptions; to dispossess the usurper, and to introduce the kingdom of God, by setting it up first in men's minds; to recover all their faculties to the liberty of innocence and purity; and so, in a word, to restore men both to God and to themselves.

Now if this were the grand design of Christ's coming into the world, to conquer and destroy sin; certainly it concerns us not to celebrate the memory of that coming by any thing that may contradict the design of it. To be vain, and dissolute, and intemperate, are strange commemorations of his nativity, who was born into the world to make men otherwise. It is indeed such a solemnity as is the proper and deserved object of our joy; but then it is to be such a joy as is in heaven, of which divine love is the principle, and purity the chief ingredient. And thus much for the second grand work of the devil, which Christ was manifested to destroy, namely sin.

(3.) The third and last is death, the inseparable concomitant of the former. This is the devil's triumphing work, by which he vaunts and shows forth the spoils of our conquered nature, the marks and trophies of this unhappy victory. For since the first entrance of sin into the world, death has dwelt amongst us, and continued, and with a perpetual, irresistible success prevailed over us. Rom. v. 12, "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Sin, as it were, opened the sluice, and death immediately, like a mighty torrent, rushed in, and overwhelmed the world. Or like a commanding enemy it invaded mankind with a ruining, destructive army following it. Plagues, fevers, catarrhs, consumptions, shame, poverty, and infinite accidental disasters; and the rear of all brought up with death eternal.

But now Christ, intending to be a perfect Saviour, came to destroy this enemy also; for the apostle tells us in 1 Cor. xv. 26, that "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Where

yet it is not to be understood, that this benefit of Christ is to extend to all men; but to those only who should believe, and be renewed by the Spirit, and become the sons of God; these are the persons "over whom the second death shall have no power." For since this deliverance proceeds upon the conditions of faith and obedience, those who reach not these conditions, are not at all concerned in it; but remaining in sin, are consigned over to death. But some will say, do not saints and believers die as well as the wicked and unbelievers? I answer, that though they do, yet the sting of death is taken away; so that from a curse, it is made a means to translate them to a better life; and that sickness, misery, or temporal death, that has nothing of curse or punishment in it, but, on the contrary, ends in that that gives an end to all misery, according to the estimate of God, comes not into the accounts of death. And this is sufficient to render Christ truly and properly a conqueror of death; that he actually conquers and destroys it in some, and has it in his power to do it in all others, would they but come up to those terms upon which only he is pleased to do it.

And thus I have shown what those works of the devil are, for the destruction of which the Son of God was manifested.

2. I come now to the last thing proposed, which is to show, what are the ways and means by which he destroys them. Where we must observe, that as those works of the devil were three, so Christ encounters them by those three distinct offices belonging to him as mediator.

(1.) As a prophet, he destroys and removes that delusion that had possessed the world, by those divine and saving discoveries of truth exhibited in the doctrine and religion promulged by him. The apostle tells the Athenians, that before the coming of Christ God winked at the ignorance and idolatry that had blinded the Gentiles; but after his coming, "commanded all men every where to repent," Acts xvii. 30. And in ch. xiv. 15, he tells the men of Lystra, that the design of his preaching was, "that they should turn from those vanities unto the living God." And still we find, that according as the gospel found reception and success, men began to be undeceived, and to shake off the yoke of their former delusions. In Acts xix. 19 we find, that upon the preaching of the gospel, those that were addicted to magic and conjuration, brought their books, though of never so great value, and burnt them publicly, as a sacrifice to the honour of Christ, and a solemn owning of the efficacy of that religion. And again, in 2 Tim. i. 10, the apostle tells us, that it was "Christ that brought life and immortality to light." The heathens' notion about the future estate of souls was absurd and fantastic; and that which the Jews had was but dim and obscure: but Christ cleared it up to mankind, under evidence and demonstration; "he uttered things kept secret from the foundation of the

world; he unlocked and opened the cabinet of God's hidden counsels, and has afforded means to enlarge men's knowledge in proportion to their concernment.

In a word, the doctrine of Christ gives the best account of the nature of God and of the nature of man; of the first entrance of sin into the world, and of its cure and remedy: of those terms upon which God will transact with mankind; and upon which men must approach to God in point of worship, and depend upon him in reference to rewards. And this is the circle of knowledge necessary and sufficient to make mankind what they so much desire to be, happy. Which if it be sought for any where but in the discoveries of Christianity, it is like seeking for the living amongst the dead: or the expectation of a vintage from a field of thistles. All that the philosophers teach about these things is either falsity or conjecture; and so tends either to make men sinful, or at the best unsatisfied. But Christ was to be "a light to the Gentiles," and there is no cozenage in the light, no fallacy in the day; wheresoever he shines, mists presently vanish, and delusions disappear.

(2.) As for the second work of the devil, sin, this the Son of God destroyed as a priest, by that satisfaction that he paid down for it; and by that supply of grace that he purchased, for the conquering and rooting it out of the hearts of believers. By the former he destroys the guilt of sin, by the latter the power. Christ when he was in his lowest condition, suffering upon the cross as a malefactor, even then he broke the chief support of the devil's kingdom, and triumphed over his strongest principality, in cashiering the guilt and loosing the bands of sin by a full expiation.

Sin that has so much venom in it as to poison a whole creation, to kindle an eternal fire and an unsupportable wrath, to shut up the bowels of an infinite mercy to poor perishing creatures, and in a word to overturn and confound the whole universe; yet being once satisfied for, it is a weak and harmless thing: it is a lion without teeth, or a snake without a sting. But none could make it so but the Son of God, the eternal high priest of souls, who exhausted the guilt and full measure of its malignity, by a superabundant ransom given for sinners to the offended justice of his Father.

(3.) As for the third and last work of the devil, which is death; this Christ, as he is a king, destroys by his power: for it is he that has "the keys of life and death, opening where none shuts, and shutting where none opens:" this even amongst men is the peculiar prerogative of princes. At the command of Christ "the sea shall give up its dead," the graves shall open, and deliver up their trust; and all the devourers of nature shall make a faithful restitution. And surely this is that which should comfort every Christian when he is upon his death-bed, and about

to lay his head upon a pillow of dust, and to take his long sleep, that he has the greatest ground in the world to expect that he shall rise again, if an omnipotence can awaken him, if the eternal Son of God can snap asunder the bonds of death, and if the word of the King of kings can give him assurance of all this.

Christ has fully finished the work for which he was manifested; he has vanquished the devil, beat down all his forts, frustrated his stratagems; and so having delivered his elect, in spite of delusion, sin, and death, and all other destructive contrivances for the ruin of souls; as a king and a conqueror he is set down at the right hand of the Most High, receiving the homage of praises and hallelujahs from saints and angels, who are continually saying, "Blessing, honour, glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, do we also render and ascribe, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for ever. Amen.



## SERMON XXVI.

THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN TO JERUSALEM.

MATTHEW II. 3.

*And when Herod the king heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.*

THOUGH all the works of God, even the most common, and such as every day meet our senses in the ordinary course of nature, carry in them a grandeur and magnificence great enough to entertain the observation of the most curious, and to raise the admiration of the most knowing; yet it has still been the method of divine providence to point out extraordinary events and passages with some peculiar characters of remark; such as may alarm the minds and engage the eyes of the world, in a more exact observance of, and attention to, the hand of God, in such great changes. And very observable it is, that the alteration of states and kingdoms, the rise and dissolution of governments, the birth and death of persons eminent in their generations, have for the most part been signalized with some unusual phenomena in nature; sometimes in the earth, sometimes in the sea, and sometimes in the heavens themselves: God thereby showing that the great affairs of the world proceed not without his own particular notice; and therefore certainly ought much more to challenge ours. And of this method of providence, as the reason on God's part cannot but be most wise, so on man's (the more is our just shame) it is no less than necessary: for that natural proneness in most men to irreligion seems to gather strength from nothing more than from an observation of the constant uninterrupted course of nature, from which some are but too ready to think, whatsoever they speak, that nature is its own god, because they never see it controlled; that things always were, and always will be, as now they are; and, in a word, that the world is unchangeable, when they do not see it changed. God therefore is sometimes pleased to interpose with a high hand, and to vary the usual course of nature, thereby to convince mankind, that this great fabric is not an automaton, so as to move itself: nor yet unaccountable, so as to acknowledge no superior law: but that it acts, or is rather acted by that eternal Spirit, and governed by that almighty and all-wise Artificer, that can order, govern, transpose, and, if occasion requires, take asunder the parts of it, as in his infinite wisdom he shall judge fit.

But of all the strange passages and prodigies by which God introduced great persons into the world, none were so notable as those that ushered in the nativity of this glorious first-born of the creation, our blessed Saviour. And indeed great reason it was, that he that was Lord of heaven should have his descending into the flesh graced and owned with the testimonies of stars and angels, one shining and the other singing at so great a blessing coming upon mankind. Accordingly the evangelist in this chapter makes it his design and business to recount some of those notable circumstances that attended our Saviour's birth, which we may reduce to these two heads.

I. The solemn address and homage made to him by the wise men of the east.

II. Herod's behaviour thereupon.

I. For the first of these, there are in this general passage these particulars considerable.

1. Who and what those wise men were.
2. From whence they came.
3. About what time they came to Jerusalem.
4. What that star was that appeared to them.
5. How they could collect our Saviour's birth by that star.

Of each of which in their order.

1. And for the first of these. The persons here rendered "wise men" (and that certainly with great truth and judgment) are in the Greek termed μάγοι, and in the Latin *magi*. The origination of which word some take from the Hebrew *radix*, signifying, in the participle *benoni in hiphil*, one that meditates or mutters. Some from a Syro-Arabic word, signifying *explorare* or *scrutari*. Others from a Persian word, but what that word is none pretends to know: though since it is probable that these *magi* did first exist amongst the Persians, it is also not improbable but that both name and thing might have their original in the same place.

As for the use of the word, it is different. As first it was taken, doubtless, not only in an honest, but also in an honourable sense; and the *magia* of the ancients was nothing else but a profound insight into all truth, natural, political, and divine. So that Suidas gives this account of the word, μάγοι παρὰ Πέρσαις οἱ φιλόσοφοι, they were the Persian philosophers. And that they were divines also is clear; for Xenophon, in his 8th book περὶ Κύρου παιδείας, commends the piety of Cyrus and his care of religion, for his appointing *magi* to preside in their sacred choirs, and to manage the offering of sacrifices, τότε πρῶτον κατεστάθησαν οἱ μάγοι ὑμνεῖν τοὺς θεοὺς, &c. And that this also was a name given to such as were skilled in politic matters is no less evident; for the great counsellors of the Persian kings were called *magi*; and Cicero affirms, in his

third book *De Naturâ Deorum*, that none were ever admitted to the Persian throne, but such as had been thoroughly instructed and trained up by these magi. For as Plato says, in his *Alcibiades*, it was their work, βασιλικὰ διδάσκειν, to teach and instil into them the arts of government.

Now this discourse is only to show, that the acception of the word amongst the Greeks and Latins, and other modern languages that speak after them, by which *magus* signifies no better than a wizard or conjurer, is through abuse and degeneration; the ill practices of some who wore this name, having by little and little disgraced the name itself into a bad sense.

As for the acception of it here by our evangelist, I doubt not but it is in a good sense, and that the persons here spoken of were great scholars, men well studied in the works of nature, and probably most seen in the mysteries of astrology, the chief and principal part of the eastern learning. For the proof of which this observation is very considerable, that the word μάγου applied to the Latins, Greeks, or Egyptians themselves, is for the most part used in a bad sense; but the same authors applying it to the Chaldeans and Persians intend it in a good, and that these men mentioned by the evangelist were Persians, shall presently be made at least very probable.

As for the condition and quality of these magi, or wise men, some contend, though I think more eagerly than conclusively, that they were kings. And for the proof of it allege several places of scripture; as first, that of Psalm lxxii. 10, "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts." But what is this to those who came not from Tarshish, nor from Sheba, but from Persia, as shall be made appear hereafter? Besides, that those words are literally spoken of Solomon, in whom they were eminently fulfilled; for we know what commerce he had with those parts, and we have also a full rehearsal of the great visit and present made him by the queen of Sheba. They allege also that place in Isaiah lx. 3, "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the glory of thy rising;" with other such texts, which they call proofs; though so unconvulsive and impertinent to the matter in hand, that they prove nothing but the folly and absurdity of those that allege them.

To the whole matter therefore I answer, that it is most improbable that these men were kings; and that the behaviour of Herod and the Jews toward them seems clearly to evince so much. For there was no mention of any pompous kingly reception, but on the contrary, he treats them as imperiously as he would have done his servants or his footmen, in ver. 8: "And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again." Which surely sounds not like language fit to bespeak princes in. Those

indeed whose chief religion is to rebel against princes, might possibly talk to them also at this rate, but it is not to be imagined that the rest of the world were yet arrived to this perfection. It is evident therefore that Herod received them not as kings, no, nor with that respect that is due to the ambassadors of kings; but rather as any of our inferior magistrates would now-a-days receive some Polonian or Hungarian, that should come to him about a brief, or for a license to show some strange outlandish feats upon a stage.

But lastly, this is an undeniable argument that they were not kings, that the evangelist is thus silent of it. For since it is manifest that his design was to set forth Christ's birth, and to render it as notable and conspicuous as he could from those passages that did attend it; it is not imaginable that he would have omitted this, that would have added so much of lustre and credit to it in the eyes of the world. The omission of it is indeed so hugely improbable, that, all things considered, it may almost pass for impossible.

2. The second thing here proposed to our consideration was the place from whence these wise men came. The evangelist describes it only by a general term, ἀπ' ἀνατολῶν, from the east. But the east is of a large compass, and therefore we may well direct our inquiries to something that is more particular.

Some therefore are of opinion, that these wise men came from Arabia, and that part of it that is called Arabia Felix, which lay eastward to Jerusalem; especially since their presents consisted of gold, myrrh, and frankincense, the proper commodities of those places: for Arabia afforded gold, and the adjoining Sabea afforded plenty of all manner of spices and perfumes. Others there are that affirm these wise men to have come from Chaldea or Assyria. I shall not trouble myself to produce or confute the several reasons upon which either of these opinions are built; but briefly give my reasons why neither of them can be admitted.

For the first. They could not come from Arabia, because there never was in Arabia any sort or sect of men known or distinguished by the name of *magi*; and therefore to bring these men from Arabia were altogether as absurd, as if in story we should bring the Brachmans, or Indian philosophers, from the Orcades, or the Druids from America. And as for that reason, that the materials of their presents were the native commodities of those regions, it proves nothing; since other countries afforded them besides, and however might have them otherwise by importation. And when men make presents, they do not always pitch upon such things as grow in their own countries, but upon the best and richest that they have in their possession.

In the next place for Assyria or Chaldea: they could not come from thence neither, forasmuch as they lay northwards to

Jerusalem: so that frequently in the prophets, when God threatens the Jews with an invasion from the Assyrians, they are still called "a nation or army coming from the north." But the evangelist expressly says, that these men came ἀπ' ἀνατολῶν, from the east, to which words this opinion is utterly irreconcilable.

Having thus removed these two opinions, I judge it most probable that they came from Persia; which as it is confirmed by the concurrent testimonies of the most eminent divines, both ancient and modern, so there wants not also solid reasons to persuade the same.

(1.) The first of which shall be taken from this; that this sort of men most flourished in Persia: they were most famous there. And I believe there may be better arguments brought to prove that the *magi* had their first rise there, than any can be brought to the contrary.

(2.) The second reason shall be taken from the situation of the place, Persia being situate eastward to Judea; so that it exactly answers the words of the evangelist.

(3.) The third and last shall be taken from the manner of their doing homage to Christ, which was that used by the Persians in expressing their homage to kings, namely by gifts and presents.

These reasons seem probably to evince, that these magi, or wise men, came from Persia: and we must know, that in matters of this nature, where demonstrations are not to be had, probable conjectures, burdened with no inconvenient consequences, are the best arguments, and such as any rational mind may well acquiesce in. And thus much for the place from whence these wise men came.

3. The third thing proposed was, the time when they came to Jerusalem; for some affirm them not to have come to Jerusalem till two years after the birth of Christ, grounding this their assertion upon what is said in ver. 16, that "Herod sent and slew all the children in and about Bethlehem, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men." Whence they infer Christ to have been two years old at the time of the wise men's arrival at Jerusalem. But the words of the text import the time to have been but very small between the birth of one and the coming of the other; for it is said in ver. 1, that "when Jesus was born, behold the wise men came," which word ἰδοὺ, *behold*, according to the phrase of scripture, is equivalent with *forthwith*, or *presently*, as might be made out by sundry parallel places. Besides, that the wise men at their coming found Christ in Bethlehem, where yet it is certain that Joseph and Mary tarried not above forty days, the time appointed by the law for her purification; from whence it follows, that the coming of the wise men must needs have been within the compass of those forty days. As for that

argument grounded upon Herod's killing the children of two years old and under, according to the time of his inquiring of the wise men, the solution of it is very easy, if we reckon those two years before the time of his inquiry, and not those two years that immediately followed it. The reason of which is manifest, forasmuch as the wise men spoke not of Christ as yet to be born, but of him as actually born; though the precise time when, they declared not, nor perhaps knew. And therefore Herod, whose design was to secure himself from a rival king, whom he heard was already born, killed all the children that were born within the space of two years before the coming of the wise men and his inquiring of them. From whence it follows, that the time of the wise men's coming to Jerusalem was some few days after the birth of Christ, probably nine or ten, and that they worshipped him at Bethlehem about the twelfth, the day still observed by the church for its commemoration.

And now, as we have here removed the opinion of those that state the time of the wise men's coming to Jerusalem two years after the birth of Christ; so another opinion that makes the star to have appeared two years before Christ's birth, is no less to be rejected, since they gave it the appellation of "his star" upon this account, that it then declared him to have been born. And whereas some, in defence of this opinion, allege the improbability of their coming from Persia in so few days; I answer, that if they be allowed to have come from those parts of it that lay nearest to Jerusalem (as well they may), it is not improbable at all; since a very learned commentator upon this place says, that some parts of Persia were not distant from Jerusalem *ultra ducentas leucas*, which, reckoning five hundred paces to a *leuca*, as some do, amount to a hundred of our miles. If fifteen hundred, as Ammianus Marcellinus does, then they make three hundred of our miles. The former of which they might go in that time very easily, and the latter with no such extraordinary great difficulty; considering that camels, the beasts of travel in those countries, are said even with great burdens to despatch forty of those *leucas*, that is, according to the latter and greater computation, threescore of our miles in a day. And thus much for the third thing, viz. the time of these wise men's coming to Jerusalem.

4. The fourth thing proposed to be considered was, what this star was. Where though some have affirmed it to have been of the same nature with those that have their proper place and motion in the celestial orbs, and though that omnipotent God, that made the sun stand still at one time, and go back at another, cannot be denied to have been able to have commanded any of the stars upon such a message and employment; yet that he actually did so is not necessary for us here to assert, there being otherwise sufficient reasons to persuade us that this was not a real star of the same kind with those heavenly bodies, but only a

bright meteor formed by the immediate power of God into the resemblance and similitude of a star, and so by a singular act of his providence used and directed to this great purpose. For had it been indeed a real star, there can hardly any reason be assigned why it should not have appeared to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as well as to those wise men in their journey from thence to Bethlehem; which yet it is clear that it did not, from the evangelist's being wholly silent of it; who otherwise would undoubtedly have recorded it as a passage, than which none could be more efficacious, to upbraid the Jews with the unreasonableness of their unbelief. Nor does its being called a star prove it to have been really so: it being so usual both in scripture and common speech to call the resemblances of things by the names of those things themselves, comets and falling stars still obtaining this appellation, which yet have nothing of stars in them but the name.

5. The fifth and last thing proposed to be discussed, was, how these wise men could collect or come to know our Saviour's birth by their seeing this star. Evident it is from the words that they had a full and clear knowledge of it. For they spake of it as of a thing granted; and therefore they ask not whether or no he was born, but where he was born. And they call it emphatically "his star;" "We have seen his star in the east;" implying that it pointed him out by a certain and peculiar designation.

To this I answer, that all knowledge must commence upon principles either natural or supernatural.

If they draw it from the former, it must have been either,

(1.) From the principles of astrology; and here, for the confutation of this, would the time and measure of this exercise permit, the vanity of this science might easily be shown, from the weakness of its principles, the confessions of such as have been most reputed for their skill in it; and what is stronger than their confessions, from their frequent mistakes and deceptions in their most confident predictions. Which sufficiently prove the greatest pretenders to it to be indeed but mere planetaries; that is, as we may well interpret it from the force of the word, such as use to err and to be deceived, and consequently that nothing certain can be concluded from their principles.

(2.) Or secondly, if these men's knowledge of Christ's birth by the star were natural, the former way being removed, it must needs have been from tradition. And as to this, some affirm that they gathered it from that prophecy of Balaam continued down to them by report from his time, which prophecy is recorded in Numb. xxiv. 17, that "a star should rise out of Jacob;" and also that they might learn it from several prophecies of the sibyls, one of which sibyls prophesied in Persia. But how much soever these prophecies of the sibyls may have obtained in the world, yet most of them relating to Christ are proved by the

learned Casaubon to be spurious and supposititious, and by all wise men believed to be such.

Others affirm, that this might have been first learned from the Jews, in the time of their dispersion; but especially from some remaining traditions of Daniel. And certainly, when we consider how much this prophet writes of the kingdom and coming of the Messiah, it is noways improbable, but that he might otherwise, both by writing and word of mouth, leave many things behind him concerning the same. All which, through the greatness of the place he held in the Persian court, and the vast repute that he had for his knowledge and learning, might easily find both a general and a lasting reception. It cannot therefore be rationally denied, but that these wise men might be much directed by such helps as these. But yet I affirm, that these were not sufficient; so that we must be forced to derive their knowledge of Christ by this star from a supernatural cause; that is, from the immediate revelation of God: how or in what manner that revelation was effected, it is not necessary for us to know; but that they were such persons to whom God upon other occasions did vouchsafe extraordinary revelations, is clear from the 12th verse, where it is said, that "they were admonished by God in a dream not to return to Herod." Now it is very probable that the same God who warned them of their danger, first suggested to them this great discovery; especially since it was not so difficult to escape the one, as to find out the other. We must conclude therefore, that it was neither their own skill, nor yet the light of that star, that taught them the meaning of that star. But Leo states the matter rightly in his fourth sermon upon the Epiphany: *Præter illam stellæ speciem quæ corporeum incitavit obtutum, fulgentior veritatis radius eorum corda perdocuit*. Starlight is but a dim light to read the small characters of such mysteries by. He only that made the stars could discover it; even that God who rules their influences, and knows their significations.

And thus much for the first notable circumstance of our Saviour's nativity, namely, the solemn address of the wise men to him from the east, upon the appearance of a star. I come now to

II. The second, which was *Herod's behaviour thereupon*; who being a person so largely spoken of in the Jewish story, so particularly noted by the evangelist, and made yet more notable by having the birth of the great Saviour of the world fall in his reign, he may well deserve our particular consideration: accordingly we will consider him in these three respects.

1. In respect of his condition and temper, in reference to his government of Judea.

2. Of his behaviour and deportment upon this particular accident.



3. Of the influence this his behaviour had upon those under his government.

1. And for the first of these; we will take an account of his condition and temper in reference to the government held by him, by these three things recorded of him, both in sacred and profane story. (1.) His usurpation. (2.) His cruelty: and, (3.) His magnificence.

(1.) And first for his usurpation. When the government of Judea was taken from the Asmoneans, the last of which that reigned was Antigonos, this Herod, the youngest son of Antipater, an Idumean, (who had grown up under Hyrcanus, being by him employed in the chief management of the affairs of his kingdom,) through the favour of Marcus Antonius, was by the Roman Senate declared king of the Jews; in which dignity, to the wonder of many, he was also confirmed afterwards by Augustus himself. But Herod had a good purse, and having also well experienced Jugurtha's observation of Rome, that it was *urbs venalis*, knew how to open it for his advantage as well as any man living: which, together with his great courage and resolution, lifted him up to, and settled him in a royal throne, so much above the pitch of any thing that by his birth he could pretend to. But let men be usurpers, and as false and wicked as they will, yet God is still righteous, and will serve and bring about his righteous purposes, even by their wickedness. And I question not but the success of Herod's projects was chiefly from the special providence of God, while the villany of them was wholly from himself: for by this strange and unexpected translation of the Jewish government, in setting the crown of it upon a stranger's head, was exactly fulfilled that eminent and most remarkable prophecy of the Messiah, in Gen. xlix. 10, that "the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come."

(2.) The second thing observable of him was his cruelty. We have already seen him seated in the Jewish throne, though a usurper and an intruder, and one who had no other title to that sovereignty, but the gift of those who had no right to give it. However being thus possessed of it, he must have recourse to the common method of usurpers, and maintain by blood what he had got by injustice. Accordingly he assassinates all such as he could but suspect might be his competitors. Aristobulus, the last of the Asmonean race, and preferred by him at the instigation of his wife Mariamne to the high priesthood, because the affections of the people were towards him, was by his appointment treacherously drowned. Nor spares he Hyrcanus himself, his predecessor, though now in the extremity of old age, and the person who had raised his father Antipater to that pitch as to give him, his son, the possibilities of a kingdom, and consequently of doing all this mischief. Nay, and his beloved wife Mariamne

also, and his own sons Alexander and Aristobulus, and at length too, his base son Antipater; and, which was the most unparalleled piece of barbarity that ever was acted, last of all, those poor infants also (which we shall presently speak of), they must all fall a sacrifice to his remorseless cruelty: so that neither the innocence of infancy, the venerableness and impotence of old age, the sacred obligations of gratitude, the love of a wife, nor, lastly, the endearing relation of a son, could prevail any thing against the inhuman resolves of his base and cruel disposition; which gave occasion to that sarcastical speech of Cæsar Augustus concerning him; "That it was better to be Herod's hog, than his son." For as a proselyted Jew, he would not meddle with the former; but as worse than a Jew, he barbarously procured the murder of the latter.

(3.) The third thing observable in the temper of this Herod was his magnificence. There was none that reigned over the Jews, Solomon only excepted, that left such glorious monuments of building behind them as did Herod. The temple, the *arx Antonia*, and his own houses, sufficiently declared his vast and boundless spirit: any one of which had been enough to have ennobled the reign of any one prince: but this was all for which he was laudable: God sometimes thinking it fit to give a man some one good quality to season his many bad ones; and so to keep him sweet above ground. Herod did many things of public advantage, and yet he scarce deserved the reputation of a public spirit, when the end and design driven at by him in all he did was his own private glory, and the gratification of his ambition. The consideration of which may teach us how great a riddle the actions of most men are, even in their most specious and public undertakings. The action may be sometimes of a national emolument, and yet the spring and design that moves it be but personal. Few men know what disguises are worn upon the public face of things, and how much the world is beholding to some men's pride and vain-glory, which often supply the office of charity in those worthy benefactions they pass upon the public; while in the mean time, the good of those that are benefited by such works is the least thing in the thoughts of those that did them. So far from impossible or improper was that supposition made by the apostle Paul in 1 Cor. xiii. 3, of a man's "bestowing all his goods upon the poor, and yet not having charity." For it is not the bulk or outside of the action, but the mind and spirit directing it, that stamps it charitable. Men may give large sums, and do generous actions, upon as great designs of selfishness, as ever the vilest miser or usurer entertained, when he amassed heaps upon heaps within his greedy coffers: only with this difference indeed, that one in all this feeds his pride, the other his covetousness. But surely pride is as much a vice as covetousness, though not always of so ill effect to

those that are about it: It is not what a man does, but how, and why, that denominates his action good or evil before God. Herod may be Herod still, for all his building of a temple.

And thus much for the three qualifications observable in Herod's person.

2. The second thing to be considered of him was, his behaviour upon this particular occasion of the wise men's coming to Jerusalem from the east, to inquire after him that was born king of the Jews, at the nativity of our blessed Saviour; which behaviour of his shows itself in these two things.

(1.) In that trouble and anxiety of mind that he conceived upon this news. He was full of suspicious, misgiving, and perplexing thoughts, what the issue of things might be, and how he should be able to maintain himself in the throne, against the claim of the right owner, which he knew he held by no other title but that of injury and usurpation.

(2.) His behaviour shows itself in that wretched course he took to secure himself against his supposed competitor; which was by slaying all the children born in and near to Bethlehem, from two years old and under; the time within which he had learnt from the wise men that Christ must have been born.

It must be confessed here (which yet certainly is very strange) that Josephus, who is so particular in recording most things relating to Herod's reign, yet speaks not a word either of the birth of Christ, or of the appearance of the star, or of the wise men's coming to Herod thereupon; nor, lastly, of the massacre of these children. All of which, one would think, were too great and too considerable passages to be passed over in silence by such an historian as Josephus.

However, this ought not to shake our faith of these things at all; since if the evangelists had falsified in these narratives, it is infinitely improbable, that the enemies of the Christian religion, who could so easily have convinced them of such falsification, should not some time or other have objected it against the truth of our religion, which yet they never did; but on the other hand, it is hugely probable, that Josephus, a great zealot in the Jewish religion, and consequently a mortal hater of ours, might, out of his hatred of it, omit the relation of these passages which were likely to give it so much reputation in the world. But as for the passage of his murdering the infants, Ludovicus Capellus is of opinion, that in that place where Josephus says, that Herod, drawing near his death, summoned the noblest of the Jews by a menacing edict from all parts of Judea, and shutting them up, gave order to his sister Salome, and her husband Alexas, to see them all put to the sword after his death; it was Josephus's intent by this device to slubber over the massacre of these innocents; thus not wholly omitting it, and yet by so obscure a narrative not clearly and plainly discovering it. But whether

this observation have any weight in it or no, I hope the testimony of those whose writings have been opposed, but never yet confuted or convinced of falsity, will have more authority and credit with us, than the ambiguity and shuffling of a partial historian.

(3.) The third thing proposed to be considered by us was, the influence that this behaviour of Herod had upon those under his government. For the text tells us, that not only he was troubled himself, but that "all Jerusalem was also troubled with him:" yet not for any love they bore him we may be sure. But they were troubled and disturbed with the fears they had of what the rage and jealousy of such a tyrant might produce: for seldom does a tyrant confine his troubles within his own breast, but that those about him also go sharers in the smart of them. And what the prophet said of Ahab may be as truly said of Herod, and all such usurpers, that "they are those that trouble Israel." For usually such persons neither rise nor fall, but at the cost of the people's blood, and the expense of many innocent lives. When tyrants and victorious rebels invade the regal power of any nation, the people must not expect to rest quiet either in peace or war: nor were the Jews here deceived in their ill-boding presages of what mischief would ensue upon Herod's discontents. Such a cloud could not gather over their heads for nothing. And long it was not before it broke out in that bloody shower that has been made mention of. From all which we may learn how much it concerns the tranquillity and happiness of a kingdom to stop the first pretences and encroachments of usurpers; and as much as in them lies to keep all Herods and Cromwells from getting into the supremacy. For as soon as their own guilt and suspicion shall alarm them with any fears of the right owner's regaining his inheritance, then presently the whole nation is in danger of being forced to a war, to defend and fight for those whom they have more heart to fight against. Or in case Providence shall favour them so far as to enable them to turn their swords against such domestic pests, yet they must still purchase their delivery by a war; that is, rid themselves of one calamity by another. So that we see, when Herods and usurpers once ravish the government into their hands, whether they stand or whether they fall, all Jerusalem is like to be troubled with them.

And thus I have finished what I proposed from the text, namely, the two grand circumstances of our Saviour's nativity. I shall now close up all with a resolution of this short question, Why that Jesus Christ, being born the right and lawful king of the Jews, yet gave way to this bloody usurper, and did not, either in his, or his successor's time, assume the government himself?

In answer to which, though I think it a solid and satisfactory reason of all God's actions to state them upon his mere will and pleasure; yet there are not wanting other reasons assignable for this. I shall pitch upon two.

1st. Christ balked the kingly government of the Jews, because his assuming it would have crossed the very design of that religion that he was then about to establish; which was to unite both Jew and Gentile into one church or body. But this union could not possibly be effected till the politic economy of that nation, so interwoven with the ceremonial and religious, like the great partition wall, was broken down. Upon good reason therefore did Christ refuse to undertake the kingly government, and therein the support of that nation, the politic constitution of which, through the special providence of God, in order to the propagation of the Christian religion, was now shortly to expire, and to be done away.

2dly. Christ voluntarily waved the Jewish crown, that he might hereby declare to the world the nature of his proper kingdom: which was to be wholly without the grandeur of human sovereignty and the splendour of earthly courts. In Luke xvii. 20, it is said, that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation." So we read it. But the Greek is *κατὰ φαντασίαν*, that is, with pomp and gaiety of outward appearance; for so the word signifies. Whereupon, in Acts xxv. 23, when Agrippa and Bernice came in much splendour and magnificence to visit Festus, it is said that they came *μετὰ πολλῆς φαντασίας*, which is there well rendered, "with much pomp."

This being so, men may save themselves the labour of entering into covenants, raising armies, and cutting of throats, to advance the sceptre and kingdom of Jesus Christ: for Christ has no need of their forces: he came to cast out such legions, and not to employ them. Here in this world he owns no sword but that of his Spirit, no sceptre but his word, no kingdom but the heart. This is his prerogative royal, to govern our wills, to command our inclinations, and to reign and lord it over our most inward affections. Which kingdom, God of his mercy daily propagate and increase within us.

To which God be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for ever.

## SERMON XXVII.

CHRIST WORTHY OF OUR HIGHEST ESTEEM.

MATTHEW x. 37.

*He that loves father or mother better than me is not worthy of me.*

OUR Saviour in these words presents himself and the world together as competitors for our best affections ; which because we never fasten upon any thing but for some precedent apprehension of worth in it, he therefore treats with us not upon terms of courtesy but reason, challenging a transcendent affection on our parts, because of a transcendent worthiness on his. He would have it before the world, for this cause only, that he deserves it above the world.

Now because men might be apt to flatter themselves into a false persuasion of their love to Christ, the heart being no less the seat and shop of deceit, than it is of love ; lest, I say, they might baffle and impose upon themselves (as sad experience shows that most men do in this particular), our Saviour, with great art, selects and singles out those enjoyments that are most apt to seize and engross our affections, and particularly states the sincerity of our love to him, in the superiority of it over our love to those. An ordinary affection relating to an extraordinary object is no affection. When Christ is the thing that we are to love, between the highest degree of love and a total negation of it, there is no medium ; as it is said of Jacob, that he loved Rachel, but he hated Leah ; because he loved Leah the less of the two. So if a man loves the world in a greater degree, and Christ in a less, when God shall come to take an estimate of that love, he will make no allowance for the comparison, but account that man absolutely to love the world and to hate Christ. For not to value him more than all, is really to undervalue him.

For the exposition of the words, we must here observe, that these terms *father* and *mother* are not to be understood in a literal, restrained sense, only as they signify such relations ; but they are to be taken more largely, as they comprise whatsoever enjoyments are dear unto us : it being usual in scripture to express all that is dear to us by some one thing that is most dear. As it is a frequent synecdoche, to express the whole by some one principal part. Prov. xxiii. 26, "My son, give me thy heart." God here requires the service of the whole man ; but the heart is only expressed, as being the prime ruling part.

Now the affection we bear to our parents, is the greatest that we are to bear to any worldly thing, and that deservedly. For if under God they gave us our beings, we may well return them our affections. So that Christ by demanding a love greater than that which upon a natural account is the greatest, and by preferring himself before that enjoyment which is the dearest, he does by consequence prefer himself before all the rest. For he that is above a prince, is consequentially above all his subjects.

As for the next expression, "He is not worthy of me;" it may seem from hence to be inferred, that he who should love Christ above father or mother, or any other worldly enjoyment, would thereby become worthy of Christ. But yet to affirm that any man may so qualify himself, or do that which may render him worthy of Christ, would be apparently to introduce and assert the doctrine of merit; a thing of the highest absurdity, both in reason and religion. In answer to this therefore we may observe that there is a twofold worthiness.

1. A worthiness strictly and properly so called, which is according to the real inherent value of the thing; and so no man by the choicest of his endeavours can be said to be worthy of Christ. He can no more merit grace than he can merit glory, and both are included in Christ. Obtain them indeed we may, but we can never deserve them. Worthiness is a thing that man can never plead before God; but after we have done all, we are still unprofitable, and therefore still unworthy.

2. There is a worthiness according to the gracious acceptance of God, which is a worthiness improperly so called: when a thing is worthy, not for any value in itself, but because God freely accepts it for such. This worth may be rather termed a fitness or a meetness, not consisting in merit, but in due conditional qualifications. And so he that loves father or mother less than Christ, is in this sense worthy of him; that is, fitly prepared and qualified to receive him; as having that which God is pleased to make the only condition upon which he bestows Christ.

These things being premised by way of exposition, I shall draw forth and prosecute the sense of the words in these three particulars.

I. I shall show what is included and comprehended in that love to Christ that is here mentioned in the text.

II. I shall show what are the reasons and motives that may induce us to it.

III. What are the signs, marks, and characters whereby we may discern it.

I. As for the first of these, *what is included in the love here spoken of*, I conceive it may include these five things.

1. An esteem and valuation of Christ above all worldly

enjoyments whatsoever. The first foundation stone of this love must be laid in admiration, and a high persuasion of that worth that we are to love. We must first believe Christ excellent, before we can account him dear. Those that profess and avow a love to Christ, and yet, by the secret verdict of their worldly minds, place a greater esteem upon a pleasure, upon honour, upon an estate, do indeed speak contradictions and delude themselves, and may as well believe their life may remain when their soul is departed, as imagine that their love may go one way, and their esteem another. Upon which account it is clear, that Christ must be first raised above the world in our judgments, he must first rule there; he must lord it in our thoughts, and command our apprehensions.

If we trace David through all his Psalms, he is continually breathing out an ardent love to God; they run all along in a strain of the highest affection. And this love we shall find to have been founded upon a proportionable esteem of God, which esteem does eminently appear in several expressions. How often does he repeat and insist upon this one, "Lord, who is like unto thee?" Psalm xxxv. 10, and lxxi. 19. His thoughts were even transported into a ravishing admiration of God's surpassing excellencies, before his heart could be drawn forth in love and affection to him; he suffered an ecstasy in his thoughts before he did in his desires. And again, Psalm xviii. 3, "Thou art worthy to be praised." God's worth, presented to the soul by thoughts of esteem, is that which so strongly and (as I may say) invincibly draws its affections. It is indeed the price of our desires, and really buys them before it has them.

Some are of opinion, that the dictates of the understanding have such a determining, controlling influence upon the will and affections, that they cannot but desire whatsoever the understanding shall sufficiently offer and propose to them as desirable. But whether or no the judgment does certainly and infallibly command and draw after it the acts of the will (which is a controversy too big to be discussed in a sermon), yet this is certain, that it does of necessity precede them, and no man can fix his love upon any thing, till his judgment reports it to the will as amiable. This must be the only gate and portal through which we must introduce loving thoughts of Christ into the heart; he must be first valued before he can be embraced. For this is undoubtedly certain, that nothing can have a greater share of our affections, than it has of our esteem.

2. This love to Christ implies a choosing him before all other enjoyments. For a man to pretend affection to Christ by extolling his person, admiring what he has done for us, by praising the ways of God, commending the practice and the practisers of godliness; and yet in the mean time to act and labour for the world, to live in sin, and upon all occasions to submit to a



temptation rather than to a precept; notwithstanding this strange opposition and clashing between his profession and his course, I suppose every rational man would read his judgment, not in his words, but in his choice. *Laudant illa, sed ista legunt*; he that commends such books, but reads others, only shows that he praises one thing but values another, and that the best interpreter of his mind is not what he says, but what he chooses.

By this Moses undeniably proved both the strength and sincerity of his love to God and to the people of God, that he chose rather to suffer afflictions with them, than to enjoy all the pleasures of Pharaoh's court. For to have solicited their cause with Pharaoh, to have procured them a mitigation of their bondage, to have won them favour and a good opinion from the Egyptians, had indeed been signs and effects of love, but this was love itself. His affection was in his choice; for had he still chosen Pharaoh's court, all other things that he could have done for his brethren had amounted rather to a good wish, than to a true affection.

Thus, on the contrary, wicked men are said to "love death:" but can any man make his greatest evil the object of his best desire, which is love? No, assuredly, while he considers it as such, he cannot; but because it is rational from men's choice to infer and argue their love, they may be said therefore truly and properly to love death, because they choose it. And by the same reason on the other side, a believer, though he may be sometimes ensnared in sin, and so brought to commit it, yet he cannot be said indeed to love it, because it is seldom his choice, but his surprise; he makes it not his end and his design. It is rather a sudden invasion made upon his affections than the resolved purpose of his will.

Thus therefore we see how the spirit and force of our love exerts itself in choice; for the design of love is to appropriate as well as to approximate its object to the soul: and to choose a thing is the first access to a propriety in it. For choice, as I may so say, is possession begun, and possession itself is nothing else but choice perfected. Barely to esteem Christ (if we may suppose a division of those things which indeed are not to be divided) is as much inferior to a choosing him, as a good look is below a good turn.

3. Love to Christ implies service and obedience to him; the same love that when it is between equals is friendship, when it is from an inferior to a superior is obedience. Love, of all the affections, is the most active; hence by those who express the nature of things by hieroglyphics, we have it compared to fire, certainly for nothing more than its activity. The same arms that embrace a friend, will be as ready to act for him. This is the natural progress of true love, from the heart to the hand; where there is an inward spring, there will quickly be an external

visible motion. When we have once placed our affection upon any person, the next inquiry naturally will be, what shall we do for him? And if this be the property of love when it lays itself out upon natural objects, we may be sure it will be heightened when it pitches upon supernatural. It is indeed changed, but withal advanced; the object altered, but the measure of the act increased. Divine and heavenly things do indeed refine and lop off the extravagancy, but they abate nothing of the vigour of our affections.

Christ has determined the case in short, John xiv. 15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." There is more real love to God shown in the least sincere act of obedience, than in the greatest and the most pompous sacrifice. Many may please themselves in their fair professions, their orthodox opinions, and their judgment about the ways of Christ, but God knows there may be much of all this, and yet but little love. It is the command that must try that; and believe it, the grand inquiry hereafter will be, not what we have thought or what we have said, but what we have done for Christ.

Christ all along in scripture proposes himself to us as our Lord and Master; and a servant's love to his master is his service. It was the idle servant that God dealt with as his enemy. How does a wicked man's love to sin appear, but by his continual, indefatigable acting and working for it, obeying its commands, and fulfilling even its vilest lusts and most unreasonable desires! Now Christ requires that every believer should manifest his love to him in that height and measure, that a wicked person manifests his love to sin. So that when he required a testimonial of Peter's affection, he did not ask him what he thought of him, or what he was ready to profess concerning him: for we know he thought him to be the Son of God, Matt. xvi. 16; and he professed, that "if all others forsook him, yet he would not," Matt. xxvi. 33; yet for all this he afterwards both denied and forswore him. Christ therefore exacts a demonstration of his love in service and obedience. "Peter, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep," John xxi. 17. He knew he that would obey and serve him, and execute his commands, loved him beyond all possibility of dissimulation. A man usually speaks, but he seldom does one thing and thinks another.

It is natural for love, where it is both sincere and predominant, to subdue the party possessed with it to undertake the most servile, laborious, and otherwise uncomfortable offices in the behalf of him whom he loves. If you will admit the paradox, it makes a man do more than he can do. Will is instead of power, and love supplies the room of ability. Had the love of Christ but once thoroughly seated itself in our hearts, we should find, that, according to that most expressive phrase of the apostle, it would "constrain us." It were but Christ's say-

ing, Go, and we should go; Do this, and we should do it. We should find a double command, one from Christ and one from our own affection. Love without works is a greater absurdity than faith without works; faith works by love, and love by obedience. Let none therefore ever think to divide himself between God and mammon; to afford his love to Christ, but his service to the world. If a man may honour his parents but not obey them, keep loyalty to his governor but rebel against him, then may also his love stand sincere to Christ while unseconded with obedience.

It is the masterpiece of Satan and our own corruptions, to bring us under this persuasion, that we may love Christ without serving him; but believe it, it is a destructive and a damnable delusion; equal in the absurdity and in the danger: and I believe, if we could divide these two and give the devil his choice, he would accept of one instead of both: give but the devil your service, and he would give Christ your love. We are apt to place all upon persuasion, but how shall we be disappointed when God comes to reckon with us for performance!

4. Love to Christ implies an acting for him in opposition to all other things; and this is the undeceiving, infallible test of a true affection. We may not only value and commend, but think also that we serve Christ by reason of the undiscernible mixture of his and our interests sometimes wrapped together; so as to be persuaded that we serve and carry on his interest, while indeed we only serve our own in another dress. I believe that John did not only persuade others, but himself also, that he served the cause of God in destroying the posterity of Ahab and the worshippers of Baal; when in truth, God's honour and his own safety, the interest of religion and of his crown, at that time so particularly met and combined together, that he mistook his own meaning, and thought he was all the time honouring of God, while he was only endeavouring to establish himself, and pursuing the designs of policy under the mask of zeal. But when two distinct interests are drawn forth in an open avowed opposition, and visibly confront one another; when those that embrace one are apparently discriminated from the other, and none can embrace both, but a man must either testify a real affection on one side, or an odious indifference and neutrality, then love will appear to be love; dissimulation will be rendered impossible, and a man will be judged to love there only where he shall dare to appear.

When Christ and the world, Christ and our honour, Christ and our profit, shall make two opposite parties, then is the time to try our affections. If one servant should follow two several persons, it were hard to discern whose servant he was, while they both walked quietly together; but should they once quarrel and come to strokes, we should quickly see by his assistance where

he had engaged his service. The truth is, it is but one and the same league, that is defensive in respect of our friends, and offensive to their enemies. Neither is there any defending of Christ's interest, without an active opposing that of Satan and the flesh, when the preservation of one lies in the destruction of the other. If Christ cannot increase, unless John decrease, the Baptist himself must not be spared. Because Peter would show that he loved Christ above the rest, he drew his sword for him. He that fights for another pawns his life that he loves him; competition is the touchstone of reality.

It is not to make invectives against sin and the courses of the world, or to speak satires against the devil, that infallibly concludes us to be Christ's disciples. Those may chide very sharply, who are yet hearty and real friends. But show me the person who can act with as keen a vigour as he speaks; who can put his foot upon the neck of his lust; who can be restless and active in circumventing, undermining, and defeating his corruption, and all this only for its implacable enmity to Christ; such a one indeed declares to the world by a demonstration of the highest evidence, that Christ bears the rule and preeminence in his affections.

Had king Josiah spoken great and glorious words of his love to God's church, and of his hatred to idolatry, this indeed might have been a far commendation of his zeal to the world, which is often deceived and almost always governed by words: but it could not have at all commended his zeal to God, who weighs all such expressions in the balance of truth and reality, and finds them wanting.

But see how this royal person's love to God manifested itself: as soon as he succeeded his father, and found the church generally corrupted, and idolatry like a usurper reigning in his kingdom, he presently throws down the altars, breaks the images, dismantles the high places, and all this in opposition to a potent prevailing interest in his kingdom. A friend at court signified but little, when he was to speak for idolatry, where the king himself looked upon the church as his crown, and the purity of religion as his prerogative. And this was to love God and religion indeed, thus to assert them actively, by engaging against their fiercest opponents, and building up the divine worship upon the ruin of its adversaries. And surely between the most glittering professions, the most enlarged vows, and highest verbal engagements for God, and between this way of taking up and owning his quarrel, there is as much difference, as there is between wearing God's colours and fighting his battles.

5. To assign the greatest and the sublimest instance in the last place. Love to Christ imports a full acquiescence in him alone, even in the absence and want of all other felicities: men can embrace Christ with riches, Christ with honour, Christ with

interest, and abundantly satisfy themselves in so doing; though perhaps all the time they put but a cheat upon themselves, thinking that they follow Christ, while indeed they run only after the loaves. What Solomon says of wisdom, that they think of religion, that it is "good with an inheritance." The devil granted it to be an easy matter for Job to serve God in the midst of that great affluence, while God set a hedge round about all that he had: but, says he to God, "put forth thine hand and touch him," strip him of all his greatness, his wealth and honour, and he will curse thee to thy face; and if Job's heart had not been made of better metal than the heart of the most specious hypocrite in the world, the devil had not been at all out in his advice, but would have certainly seen his prediction verified in Job's behaviour.

Many love Christ as they love their temporal king; while he flourishes, and has the opportunity of obliging his dependants, they will be sure to stick close by his side: but would they follow him into banishment, and pay allegiance to majesty poor, and bare, and forlorn? and if Providence should debase him to so low a pitch, could they honour him in rags, as much as they do in purple? and give him the same homage wandering in the land of strangers, that they show him riding in the head of his own armies? No; the case comes to be altered here. When indeed duty and emolument conspire, one may easily be performed, because in the very same action the other may be intended: but when they part, and virtue is to set off itself merely upon the stock of its own worth, there men generally look upon it as upon a fair woman without a portion: all will commend, but none will marry her.

But this was the great and infallible demonstration, that all the ancient heroes in the faith gave of their love to God, that they took him alone for an inheritance and a patrimony, and embraced religion separate from all temporal accessions, as the utmost limit of their desires, the just measures of their designs, and the sole and ample object of their satisfaction. Abraham left his country, his family, his estate, following God upon his bare word and command. The disciples left all, and followed Christ; the primitive Christians and martyrs relinquished every worldly enjoyment even to life itself, and embarked all their hopes, all their fortunes and felicities, both present and future, in this one bottom, looking for all these, and that which was much better and greater than all, entirely in their religion.

But because human nature has great arguments and reluctancies against such an heroic act of piety, God, that he might cast all our duties within the rules and measures of reason, which is the proper "drawing us with the cords of a man," has provided greater arguments to induce us to such an undertaking, than flesh and blood can produce against it. For when he called Abraham from the very bosom of his friends and fortunes, he

did not divert his will from one desirable object without proposing to it another: but he both answers his desires and obviates his fears, in that infinitely full and encouraging promise, Gen. xv. 1, "Fear not, Abraham; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." A promise that might reach the very utmost of his thoughts, confute his doubts, and make good the reason of his obedience in all circumstances whatsoever. And Christ makes the same promise to all his, Matt. xix. 29, that "there is none who should leave father, or mother, or lands for his sake and the gospel's, but should receive an hundredfold in this world, and in the world to come everlasting life." That is, they should receive that high satisfaction, pleasure, and peace of mind, that should be an hundredfold greater than any that is conveyed to the heart of man from the vastest abundance of worldly treasures and enjoyments. So that in all these high instances of religion, God is pleased to convince as well as to command us to obedience, still interweaving argument with precept, and so making our love to him as rational as it can be religious.

And therefore let men frame to themselves what measures of religion they please, yet if they cannot love and acquiesce in it, when Providence shall leave them nothing in the world else to bestow their love upon, but dispossess them of all the former delights of their eyes and joys of their hearts, (of which we have but too frequent and pregnant examples in many, whose fortunes have been ground to nothing by some sad calamities), such must assure themselves that all their love to Christ is trifling and superficial, and far from that sincerity that makes it genuine, saving, and victorious over the world. And God knows how soon he may bring all our pretences to so severe a trial; and what need the weak heart of man will then have of such a principle to support it, when it shall find itself beat off from all its former holds, bereft of its supplies, and every thing on this side heaven frowning and looking sternly upon it. It will be then found that religion is not a chimera or a fancy, and that the pious man has something or other within him that makes him hold up his head, while others in the same calamity droop and despond.

Where the love of Christ has once possessed itself of the heart, though a man lives in the world, yet he lives not upon it. And therefore when nothing is imported from without, he can say to the world as Christ did once to his disciples, "I have meat that ye know not of." "A good man," says Solomon, "is satisfied from himself;" he carries his store, his plenty, his friends, and his preferments about him. Nothing could more excellently and divinely express this condition than those words of our Saviour, John vii. 38, "He that believes on me, as the scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Cisterns may be broken, and we removed from them or they from us; but he that has a fountain within him can never be athirst.

Having thus despatched the first particular, and shown those five things included in the love to Christ spoken of in the text, I proceed now to

II. The second, which is to show *what are the reasons and motives that may induce us to this love*. And for this I might insist upon that mighty and commanding cause of love, the amiableness and high perfection of Christ's person; which contains in it the very "fulness of the Godhead bodily;" all the glories of the Deity are wrapped up and included in it; they reach as wide as infinity, and as far as eternity. His vast, unlimited knowledge and wisdom, his uncontrollable power and his boundless goodness, are all objects to excite such an esteem and admiration of him as must naturally pass into love.

Every thing that is but good attracts love, but that which is excellent commands it; and then how amiable must that nature needs be of which the sun, the gloriousest creature in the world, is but a glimpse, the light itself a shadow, and the whole universe, that is, the united glories of heaven and earth, but a broken copy and an imperfect transcript. "Thou art fairer than the children of men," says the prophet David, Psalm xlv. 2; and beauty, all confess, is the grand celebrated motive of affection. The whole Song of Solomon is but a description of those raptures of love into which the church had been raised by a contemplation of the unparalleled beauties of Christ. All the perfections we behold and admire in the world, either in men or women, are but weak traces and faint imitations of the divine beauty, which is the original: and which would infinitely more captivate our desires, could we see things with an intellectual eye, as clearly as we do with a corporeal. But I shall not dwell upon these motives of love drawn from the perfection of Christ considered in himself, but as relating to us and to our concerns, and so I shall assign these two motives of our love to him.

1. That he is best able to reward our love.

2. That he has shown the greatest love to us.

1. And for the first of these, that he is best able to reward our love. I confess, that to love merely for reward, is not so properly to love as to traffic, and flows not from affection but design. But on the other side, to love a worthless thing, to embrace a cloud, or for a vine to cling about a bramble, is not to bestow, but throw away affection. The "recompence of reward" is a thing always to be respected, though not to be solely intended. And the very pleasure and satisfaction that the mind finds in loving a worthy and a noble object, is a considerable reward of that very love. Virtue and religion composes the thoughts, answers the desires, and satisfies the conscience of him that loves it. The absolving clearness of which is a gratuity much greater than any that either the pleasure of the sin or of the world can bestow. The

sensual epicure catches at the delights of sense, and lets out the whole stream of his desires upon them. But what answer and return do they make him? Does he not find them like the apples of Sodom, rotten as well as alluring, fair to the sight, but crumbling into ashes by the touch? How do they vanish into smoke, and air, and nothing, and lose all their credit upon experience! Trial puts a period to them, as it must do to all empty, fantastic enjoyments, that owe their value only to distance and expectation.

Those that have been the most insatiable lovers of pleasure, profit, and honour, and such other worldly incentives of love; and have had all their desires pursued and plied with constant surfeiting fruitions of them; let them at last run over all with a severe and a reflecting thought, and see whether they have not been rather wearied than satisfied, their love still determining in loathing, or at least in indifference. How have they been paid for all their love? Why, some have been paid with the wages of poverty, some of diseases, some of shame, but all with dissatisfaction. "What fruit have we of those things?" says the apostle most emphatically: which words are not so much the voice of a man, as of mankind, upon a survey of all temporal fruitions. There is an emptiness during the enjoyment of them, and a sting in the remembrance: present they deceive, and being past they disturb. And now must vanity and vexation be taken for a valuable price of that affection that Christ would purchase with the pleasures of virtue and the glories of heaven, with present satisfaction and future salvation?

Go over the regions of hell and mansions of the damned, and there you will see how sin and the world have rewarded men for all the love they have shown them. They have made most men miserable, even in this life; but did they ever make any one happy in the other? in which alone happiness and misery are considerable, as being there alone unchangeable. Consider a man making his addresses to his beloved sin, as Samson did to his Delilah; he courts and caresses it, sacrifices his strength and unbosoms his very soul to it; he breaks through bars, and gates, and walls to visit it: is impatient of wanting the delights of its company: and now how is he recompensed for all these heights of love? Why, he is answered with tricks and arts, with traps and treacheries: he is dissembled with, and betrayed to his mortal enemies: those eyes are put out by the person upon whom they doted, and the lap he slept in delivers him into perpetual imprisonment, misery, and intolerable disgrace. It is impossible for a man to show more love than he does to sin, and it is not possible for his bitterest enemy to pay him with more fatal returns. The truth is, a man in all his converse with sin courts a serpent, and hugs a scorpion, which will be sure to strike and sting him to death for all his kindness.



But because there are other things besides sin that are apt to bid fair for our love, as the possessions and honours of the world, let us see what kind of requital they make for that great love that they find from their most passionate suitors and pursuers. A man perhaps loves riches with that vehemence of desire, that he thinks gold cannot be bought too dear, though the price of it be his natural rest, his health, his reputation, his soul, and every thing. But now after all this, what does he find in it to recompense such an unwearied, unconquerable love? Can it ease his conscience, when the injustice by which he gained it shall torment him? Can it reconcile him to heaven? or afford him one drop of cold water in hell to cool his tongue when it has brought him thither?

And why then should a man fling away the very spirit and quintessence of his soul, his love, upon such an ungrateful object as can make him no return? Would he bestow half of his watchings, his labours, and painful attendances, in the matters of religion, in stating businesses between God and his soul, he might raise himself such an interest, as should scorn the batteries of fortune, the injuries of time, and the very powers of hell, such a one as should stand victorious and eternal, trample upon the world, conquer death, and even outlive time itself. Let that thing or person therefore have our love that will give most for it; and this shall be the first motive or argument for our placing it upon Christ.

2. The second shall be taken from this consideration, that Christ has shown the greatest love to us. Love is the most natural, proper, and stated price of love. It is a debt that is not to be paid but in kind; it scorns all other return or retaliation; and Christ is so much beforehand with us in this respect, that should we show him the utmost love that humanity is capable of exerting, yet our love could not come under the notion of kindness, but of gratitude: for we cannot prevent him in the first acts; but only answer him in the subsequent returns of it. It is not a giving, but a paying him our affection.

The united voice of all the world heretofore proclaimed the baseness of ingratitude, and you needed not have amplified upon the topic of several vices, to have represented a man vile; for that charge alone of being ungrateful, was a compendious account of all ill qualities, and left a greater brand upon a man, than whole volumes of satires and loud declamations against him. For the truth is, it is a vice that has in it a peculiar malignity, tending to dissolve and fret asunder the bands of society, and amicable converse between men; forasmuch as society subsists by a mutual intercourse of good offices; and if there were no correspondence and exchange of one friendly action for another, company could not be desirable: and a man might command the same enjoyment in the solitudes of a desert and a howling

wilderness, that he could in a populous city, well inhabited, and wisely governed.

Every ungrateful person, that receives much kindness but repays none, only acts another kind of robbery, for he really withholds a due, and is indeed a thief within the protection of the law. Ingratitude is as great a sin in the sight of God, as any that is punishable by the laws of men; and has as little to plead for itself upon the stock of human infirmity as any sin whatsoever. For nature prompts, and even urges a man to acknowledge a benefit conferred on him; and that so far, that an obligation noways answered, lies like a load and a burden upon an ingenuous mind; and a man must have debauched and worn out the natural impressions of ingenuity to a very great degree, before he can be unconcerned where he has been much obliged.

Now Christ has obliged us with two of the highest instances of his love to us imaginable.

(1.) That he died for us. The love of life is naturally the greatest, and therefore that love that so far masters this, as to induce a man to lay it down, must needs be transcendent and supernatural. For life is the first thing that nature desires, and the last that it is willing to part with. But how poor and low, and in what a pitiful, shallow channel does the love of the world commonly run! Let us come and desire such a one to speak a favourable word or two for us to a potent friend, and how much of coyness, and excuse, and shyness shall we find! the man is unwilling to spend his breath in speaking, much less in dying for his friend. Come to another, and ask him upon the stock of a long acquaintance, and a professed kindness, to borrow but a little money of him, and how quickly does he fly to his shifts, pleading poverty, debts, and great occasions, and any thing, rather than open his own bowels to refresh those of his poor neighbour! the man will not bleed in his purse, much less otherwise, to rescue his friend from prison, from disgrace, and perhaps a great disaster.

But now how incomparably full and strong must the love of Christ needs have been, that could make him sacrifice even life itself for the good of mankind, and not only die, but die with all the heightening circumstances of pain and ignominy; that is, in such a manner, that death was the least part of the suffering! Let us but fix our thoughts upon Christ hanging, bleeding, and at length dying upon the cross, and we shall read his love to man there, in larger and more visible characters than the superscription that the Jews put over his head in so many languages. All which, and many more, were not sufficient to have fully expressed and set forth so incredibly great an affection. Every thorn was a pencil to represent, and every groan a trumpet to proclaim, how great a love he was then showing to mankind.

And now surely our love must needs be very cold, if all the

blood that ran in our Saviour's veins cannot warm it; for all that was shed for us, and shed for that very purpose, that it might prevent the shedding of ours. Our obnoxiousness to the curse of the law for sin, had exposed us to all the extremity of misery, and made death as due to us, as wages to the workman. And the divine justice, we may be sure, would never have been behind-hand to pay us our due. The dreadful retribution was certain and unavoidable, and therefore since Christ could not prevent, he was pleased at least to divert the blow, and to turn it upon himself; to take the cup of God's fury out of our hands, and to drink off the very dregs of it. The greatest love that men usually bear one another is but show and ceremony, compliment, and a mere appearance, in comparison of this. This was such a love as, Solomon says, is "strong as death;" and, to express it yet higher, such a one as was stronger than the very desires of life.

(2.) The other transcendent instance of Christ's love to mankind, was that he did not only die for us, but that he died for us while we were enemies, and (in the phrase of scripture) enmity itself against him. It is possible indeed that some natures, of a nobler mould and make than the generality of the world, may arise to such an heroic degree of love, as to induce one friend to die for another. For the apostle says, that "for a good man one would even dare to die." And we may read in heathen story of the noble contention of two friends, which of them should have the pleasure and honour of dying in the other's stead; and writing the inward love of his heart in the dearest blood that did enliven it. Yet still the love of Christ to mankind runs in another and a higher strain; for admit that one man had died for another, yet still it has been for his friend, that is, for something if not of equal, yet, at least, of next esteem to life itself, in the common judgment of all. Human love will indeed sometimes act highly and generously, but still it is upon a suitable object, upon something that is amiable: and if there be either no fuel, or that which is unsuitable, the flame will certainly go out.

But the love of Christ does not find, but makes us lovely. It "saw us in our blood" (as the prophet speaks), wallowing in all the filth and impurities of our natural corruption, and then it said unto us, "Live." Christ then laid down his life for us, when we had forfeited our own to him. Which strange action was, as if a prince should give himself a ransom for that traitor, that would have murdered him; and sovereignty itself lie down upon the block to rescue the neck of a rebel from the stroke of justice. This was the method and way that Christ took in what he suffered for us; a method that reason might at first persuade us to be against nature, and that religion assures us to be above it. But such a one that both reason and religion cannot but convince us to be the highest and the most unanswerable argument for a surpassing love to Christ on our parts, that (be it

spoken with reverence) God himself could afford us. An argument that must render every sin of so black and dismal a hue under the economy of the gospel, that there is no monster comparable to the sinner, to him that can hate after so much love, and by his ingratitude rend open those wounds afresh that were made only to bleed for his offences.

Having thus shown the reasons and arguments to enforce our love to Christ, I descend now to

III. The third and last thing, which is to show the *signs and characters whereby we may discern this love*. Love is a thing that is more easily extinguished than concealed. It needs no herald to proclaim it, but wheresoever it is, it will be sure to show itself. Fire shines as well as burns, and needs nothing but its own light to make it visible and conspicuous. But yet to make a clearer discovery of the sincerity of our love to Christ, I shall give these three signs of it.

1. A frequent and indeed a continual thinking of him. "Where your treasure is," says our Saviour, "there will your heart be also." That is, whatsoever you love and value, that will be sure to take up your thoughts. Love desires the presence of the object loved, and there is no way to make distant things present but by thought. Thought gives a man the picture of his friend, by continually representing him to his imagination. "O how love I thy law!" says David; it is "my meditation day and night." It kept him waking upon his bed, and was a greater refreshment to him than his natural repose. Let every man reflect upon his own experience, and consult the working of his own breast, and he will find how unable he is to shut the door upon his thoughts, and to keep them from running out after that thing, whatsoever it is, that has seized his affections. Whatsoever work he is about, whatsoever place he is in, still his thoughts are sure to be there.

And can that man then pretend a love to religion, who seldom makes it the business of his thoughts and meditations? He that thinks of God but now and then, and by chance, or upon the weekly returns of a sermon, when the preacher interrupts his other thoughts, shows that God and religion are strangers to his heart, and his most inward affections. David makes this the proper mark and the very characteristic of a wicked and a profane person, that "God is not in all his thoughts:" the very bent and stream of his soul is another way. Love is the bias of the thoughts, and continually commands and governs the motion of them. And therefore if a man would have an infallible account of his own heart, let him impartially ask himself, what hours he sets aside to meditate upon the matters of religion, the state of his soul, the conditions upon which he must be saved, and what evidences he has of his repentance, and his interest in the second

covenant; as also to consider with himself the quality of his sins, and the measures of his sorrow; and whether after all he gets ground of his sin, or his sin of him. Let every man, I say, inquire of his own heart what time he allots for these thoughts, and whether he is not delighted when he can retire for this purpose: and, on the contrary, grieved and displeased when by some cross accident or other he is diverted and taken off from thus retreating into himself. If he finds nothing of this in the course of his life (as it is to be feared very few do), let him rest assured that he is not in earnest when he calls himself a Christian. For Christianity is not his business, his design, and consequently not his religion: but, applied to him, is only a name, and nothing else.

2. The second sign of a sincere love to Christ, is a willingness to leave the world, whensoever God shall think fit to send his messenger of death to summon us to a nearer converse with Christ. "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ," says the blessed apostle. For is it possible for any to love a friend, and not to desire to be with him? Upon which account I have often marvelled how some people are able to reconcile the sincerity of their love to Christ, with such an excessive, immoderate dread of death. For do they fear to be in Abraham's bosom, and in the arms of their Saviour? Are they unwilling to be completely happy, to be saved and glorified, and to have their hopes perfected into possession and actually to enjoy, what they profess themselves earnestly to expect?

Those who have a spiritual sight of these things, and a rational persuasion of their title to them, surely cannot look upon that, through which they must pass to them, with so much horror and consternation. The first effect that a true and lively faith has upon the soul is to conquer the fear of death: for if Christ has done any thing for us, he has disarmed that, and taken away the grimness, the sting, and terror of that grand adversary. But some men have to set their heart and soul upon the things of this world, that it is death to them to think of dying; they do not so much depart, as are torn out of the world; and the separation between this and them is harder than that between their soul and their body. How intolerable is it to them, to think of parting with a fair estate, a flourishing family, and great honour! How hardly are they brought to exchange their heaven here below for one above! This is the mind of most men, and it shows itself through all their glorious pretences; but let those who are so minded, whatsoever love they may profess to Christ, rest assured of the truth of this, that they love that most, which they are willing to relinquish last.

3. A third, and indeed the principal sign of a sincere love to Christ, is a zeal for his honour, and an impatience to hear or see any indignity offered him. A person truly pious will mourn for

other men's sins as well as for his own. "Mine eyes run down with tears," says David, "because men keep not thy commandments." He is grieved that God is dishonoured, whosoever the person be that does it. He weeps over the vicious lives of those that are round about him, though they cannot wound his conscience, yet because of the wound and blow that the scandal of them gives to religion. For it is the honour and reputation of that, that he espouses as his own concernment; forasmuch as every man even in temporal things looks upon his very personal interest as wrapped up in the credit of his profession. And therefore where such a one hears the name of God profaned, religion scoffed at and abused, his blood boils, and his heart grows hot within him, and he cannot but vindicate the honour of his Maker, in reproving the blasphemer to his teeth.

Some indeed will not discourse filthily or atheistically themselves, but can quietly and contentedly enough hear others do so; but let such know that they go sharers in the blasphemy that they do not reprehend; and have as little love to Christ, as that son to his father, who should patiently hear him reviled and traduced in company, and acquit himself upon this account, that he did not revile him himself: or that subject to his prince, who could read a libel of him with pleasure, and make good his loyalty to him upon this ground, that he was not the author of it: though in all base and unworthy actions, the difference between the author and the approver of them, by the judgment of all knowing persons, is not great.

Never did our Saviour himself express so keen and fierce an indignation, as when he saw men profaning the temple, and turning his Father's house into a den of thieves: he then added compulsion to complaint, force to his words, and drove out those hucksters in the face of danger, and in spite of resistance, fearing neither the authority of the rulers, nor the insolence of the rabble. Thus did Christ manifest his love to his Father, which love he has left as the pattern and standard by which we should measure our love to him.

And thus I have given you some survey of the love that Christ exacts from all those who aspire to the name and privilege of Christians. You have seen the several parts and ingredients of it, the arguments for it, and, lastly, the marks and signs declaring it; which surely will be some use and moment to every man to conduct him in that grand inquiry about his spiritual state and condition. If the love of Christ is not in him, the merits of Christ's death belong not to him; but he is a member of Satan, and a vessel of reprobation. Certainly had men a deep and a lively sense of that eternal misery that Christ has declared the portion of those who relate not to him, they would give their eyes no sleep, nor their thoughts any rest, till they had satisfied themselves of that sincerity that alone must stand be-

tween them and eternal wrath; and withal entitle them to those numerous and great blessings that lie wrapped up in the womb of that one comprehensive promise, that "all things shall work together for the good of those that love God."

To which God be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

## SERMON XXVIII.

### PART I.

#### THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST A MOTIVE TO CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER.

#### EPHESIANS III. 12.

*In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*

THERE is no duty or action of religion, in which it concerns a man to proceed with so much exactness, as in prayer; it being the greatest and most solemn intercourse that earth can have with heaven; the nearest access to him who dwells in that light that is indeed inaccessible: and in a word, the most sovereign and sanctified means, to derive blessing, happiness, glory, and all that heaven can give or heart desire, upon the creature. But since the distance between God and us is so great by nature, and yet greater by sin, it concerns us to see upon what terms of security we make our address to him: for it cannot be safe for a traitor to venture himself as a petitioner into the presence of his prince, whatsoever his wants or necessities may be. And that sin puts us in the very same capacity in reference to God is most sure; so that if there be no accommodation and reconciliation first found out, for any sinner to come to God, is but for him to cast himself into the arms of a consuming fire, to provoke an imminent wrath, to beg a curse, and to solicit his own damnation.

But Christ has smoothed a way for us, and turned the tribunal of justice into a throne of grace; so that we are commanded to change our fears into faith; to lift up our heads, as well as our hands, and to come with a good heart, not only in respect of innocence, but also in respect of confidence.

For the prosecution of the words I shall endeavour the discussion of these four things.

I. That there is a certain boldness and confidence very well consisting with and becoming of our humblest addresses to God.

II. That the foundation of this confidence is laid in the mediation of Jesus Christ.

III. I shall show the reasons why the mediation of Christ ought to minister such confidence to us in our access to God.



IV. And lastly, I shall show whether or no there be any other ground that may rationally embolden us in these our approaches to him.

I. And for the first of these, *that there is a certain boldness and confidence very well consisting with and becoming of our humblest addresses to God.* This is evident; for it is the very language of prayer to treat God with the appellation of "father;" and surely every son may own a decent confidence before his father, without any entrenchment either upon paternal authority or filial reverence. For when God by the Spirit of adoption has put us into the relation of sons, he does not expect from us the behaviour of slaves, and allow of no other expresses of our honour to him but distance and amazement, silence and astonishment. As for the nature of this confidence, it is not so easily set forth by any positive description, as by the opposition that it bears to its extremes; which are of two sorts: 1. In defect; 2. In excess.

1. And for those of the first sort, that consist in defect.

(1.) This confidence is in the first place opposed to desperation and horror of conscience. A temper that speaks aloud in those desponding ejaculations of the psalmist, Psalm lxxvii. 7—9. "Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? and doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Every word seems to be the voice of a soul supposing itself in the very brink of hell, and even already singed with the everlasting burnings. Nor does despair here only put it to the question as the psalmist does; but takes it for a granted, concluded truth, and verily believes that matters stand thus between God and the despairing person; who looks upon God as his implacable adversary, and himself as under a condemning sentence that is both final and irreversible. Nothing can be imagined more black and dismal than those thoughts and representations, that such a mind frames to itself of God's power and justice. For it thinks that this latter is inexorable, and that the former is wholly employed about the execution of its severe decrees. These grim attributes constantly exercise and take up the meditations; which considered with relation to the state of a sinner, absolutely in themselves, and without any qualification or allays from mercy, must needs drive a man into all the agonies and terrors of mind that can be. For what can a sinner hope for, from power and justice without mercy? What can he expect but the extremity of wrath and revenge? a separation from God and a consignment over to eternal miseries?

But besides, if despair does sometimes think and reflect upon mercy, yet it expects no share in it; but supposes the bowels

shut up, the relings past, and the day of grace spent and gone. Now so long as it thus misrepresents and libels God to the conscience in all his attributes, how is it possible for a man to have the confidence to pray to him? Despair stupifies and confounds, and stops not only the mouth, but the very breath, and, as it were, keeps and confines a man within himself.

It is natural for every thing to fly from an enemy, and while a man apprehends God to be so, he would, if it were possible, convey himself out of his very sight. He that presumes to ask a thing of another, is prompted to the doing so, by an opinion of the proneness of such a one to hear and relieve him in all his straits and necessities; but no man puts a petition into the hands of his tormentor, or asks any other favour of his executioner but to despatch him quickly. No man can pray where he cannot hope.

That confidence therefore that must qualify us for and attends us in prayer, is opposed to all kind of desperation, which by making a man account God his enemy, and thereby forbear praying to him, makes him indeed his own.

(2.) This confidence is opposed also to doubtings and groundless scrupulosities. 1 Tim. ii. 8, "I will," says Paul, "that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." Why? Suppose they should doubt and waver in presenting their prayers to God; James i. 7, "Let not such an one," says St. James, "think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." And the reason is plain, for no man is to pray for any thing, but what God both allows and commands him to pray for. In which case, if he doubts of the issue and success of his prayer, is it not clear that his suspicion upbraids either God's power, that he cannot, or his truth, that he will not make good the effects of his promise? And would any great man favour a petitioner that should entertain such thoughts of him? Would he not rather think himself affronted than honoured by such an address? *Qui timide rogat, docet negare.* No man counts himself any longer obliged to do a kindness, after he comes once to be suspected: for to suspect a man is to asperse his clearness and ingenuity, and plainly declares that we judge him not really to be what he pretends and appears; than which there cannot be a greater and a more injurious reflection upon the divine goodness.

God does not love a misgiving, half-persuaded petitioner, that comes in suspense and trembling, sometimes hopes, sometimes fluctuates, and, in a word, cannot be so properly said to come as a petitioner, as an adventurer to the throne of mercy. God loves to maintain worthy apprehensions of himself and of all his dealings, in the minds of such as serve him; and it is but reason that those apprehensions should shine forth in the freedom of their deportment, and in their frank reliance upon his readiness to give or do whatsoever shall be fit for them to ask.

But it will perhaps be pleaded in defence and excuse of such doubting, that it arises not from any unbecoming thoughts of God, but from the sense of the unworthiness of him that prays; which makes him question the success of his petition, notwithstanding all the divine mercy and liberality. And this seems to be so far from a fault, that it ought rather to be cherished and commended as an effect of the grace of humility.

But to this I answer, that by the plea of unworthiness is meant, either an unworthiness in point of merit; and so the argument would keep a man from praying for ever, forasmuch as none can ever pretend a claim of merit to the thing he prays for, as shall be more fully observed hereafter. Or secondly, it is meant of an unworthiness in point of fitness to receive the thing prayed for; which fitness consists in that evangelical sincerity, that makes a man walk with that uprightness, as not to allow himself in any sin. But for a man to plead himself unworthy upon this account, is to plead himself unfit to pray: for whatsoever makes him fit to pray, makes him fit also to expect the thing asked for in prayer. This therefore concerns not the matter in debate; for the question is, whether he that is duly qualified for such an address to God, can without sin doubt of the issue of that address? Which we deny: otherwise it is most certainly true, according to that of Solomon, that "the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to God;" and that such a one may not only lawfully doubt whether he shall be heard or no, but ought to conclude, that without all doubt he shall not be heard.

But it may be urged further. Does not experience show, that persons that are thus qualified in point of sincerity and uprightness before God, do not always obtain the things they sue for, but are sometimes answered with a repulse? For did not David earnestly pray for the life of his child, and yet was denied it? And the like instances might be produced of several other saints. Now where a man is sure that the prayers of the righteous are not always granted, may not he very well doubt of the success of his own?

To this I answer, that in that respect that a man ought to pray for any thing from God, the prayer of no righteous person was ever denied. For every man is to pray for a thing with submission to the divine will, and so far as God shall think fit to grant it. And in this respect no man is to entertain the least doubt in prayer, but stedfastly to believe that God will vouchsafe him the thing he petitions for, so far as the ends of God's glory and his own good shall make the granting of that thing necessary. Otherwise for a man to expect absolutely and infallibly the event of whatsoever he prays for, only because he thought fit to pray for it, is a great folly, and a bold presumption; it is to determine and give measures to the divine bounty and wisdom; to tell it

what it ought to do; to send instructions to heaven, and in a word, it is not so properly to pray, as to prescribe to God.

2. Having thus shown the two extremes to which the confidence spoken of in the text is opposed in point of defect, I come now to treat of those to which it is opposed in point of excess, and to show, that as it excludes despair and doubting on the one hand, so it banishes all rashness and irreverence on the other. It is indeed hard for the weak and unsteady hearts of men to carry themselves in such an equal poise between both, as not to make the shunning of one inconvenience the falling into another; but the greater the danger is, the greater must be our attention to the rule.

(1.) First of all then, confidence in point of excess is opposed to rashness and precipitation. Rashness is properly a man's sudden undertaking of any action, without a due examination of the grounds or motives that may encourage him to it, and of the reasons that may on the other side dehort and deter him from it: an omission of either of which makes it rash and unreasonable. And prayer surely, of all other duties and actions, ought to be a reasonable service. It calls upon him that undertakes it to consider before he resolves, again and again to consider, into what presence he is going, what the thing is that he is about to do, what preparedness and fitness he finds in himself for it, what the advantages of a right, and what the sad consequences of an undue performance of it are like to be.

I have read that it has been reported of a holy person, that he used to bestow a whole hour at least in meditation before he kneeled down to that prayer which perhaps he uttered in three minutes. He that goes about to pray, must know that he goes about one of the weightiest and the grandest actions of his whole life. And therefore let him turn his thoughts to all the ingredients and circumstances relating to it; let him meditate before what a pure and a piercing eye he presents himself; such a one as shoots into all the corners and recesses of his heart like a sun-beam, as ransacks all his most concealed thoughts, views all the little indirect designs, the excursions and wanderings of his spirit, and spies out the first early buddings and inclinations of his corruption. And as it sees them, so it cannot but abhor and detest them, unless their guilt be washed off by repentance, and covered under the imputed righteousness of a Saviour.

Let him consider, how it were like to fare with him, if this should happen to be his last prayer, and God should stop his breath in the very midst of it, and interrupt him with a summons into another world: whether, in such a case, he should be found in a fit posture to own an appearance at that fearful tribunal, without blushing and confusion of face. No man is fit to pray, that is not fit to die.

Let him consider also, whether there are not the scores of old

sins yet uncanceled lying upon his hand? Whether he is not in arrears to God in point of gratitude for past mercies, while he is begging new; and whether he has not abused that bounty that he is now imploring, and made the liberality of heaven the instrument of his vanity, and the proveditor for his lust; even in a literal sense "turning the grace of God into wantonness." These things should be recollected and canvassed with a deep, close, and intent reflection, and all reckonings (as much as possible) set even between God and the soul.

David would first wash his hands in innocency, before he would presume to compass God's altar, Psalm xxvi. 6. But how few are there, that think preparation any part of this duty. They bolt immediately into the presence of God, though perhaps they come but newly from doing that, that they would not own in the presence of men. They come with the guilt of fresh sins warm upon their consciences, lifting up those hands in prayer, that were lately busied in all kind of rapine and violence; and joining in it with those tongues that were not long before the instruments of railing, filth, and obscenity. As David washed his hands, so such persons should do well to wash their mouths also, before they approached the place of divine worship, especially when they were to bear a part in it. With what awe and veneration did Jacob look and think upon the place where God had appeared to him! Gen. xxviii. 16, 17, "Surely," says he, "the Lord was in this place and I knew it not; and he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! it is none other but the house of God." But sad experience shows, that men now-a-days resort to that, that they both call and think the house of God; but yet behave themselves in it, as if it were neither holy nor dreadful: though if God were not more merciful than men are sinful, they would feel by a severe instance that it was both.

There is some boldness that is the effect of blindness; and surely it is this, that brings men to so sacred and so concerning an action as prayer is, with such trivial spirits, such rambling, uncollected thoughts, and such offensive, profane behaviours. But such persons must know, that this is far from the boldness mentioned in the text: and that though God both allows and enjoins a due confidence in our accesses to him, yet still they are to remember that confidence does not exclude caution.

(2.) The confidence spoken of in the text, in point of excess, is opposed to impudence or irreverence; which, the truth is, is but the natural effect and consequent of the former: for he that considers not the sacredness of a thing or action, cannot easily pay it that devotion and reverence that the dignity of it requires. There are many ways by which this irreverence may show itself in prayer, but I shall more especially mention and insist upon two.

1st. The using of saucy, familiar expressions to God. A practice that some heretofore delighted in to that degree of ex-

travagance, that he that should have stood without the church, and not seen what was doing within it, would have verily thought that somebody was talking to his equal and companion. Now the ground of this must needs have been from gross, low, and absurd conceptions of God, and withal very fond and high opinions of themselves, by which they thought themselves such absolute masters of his favour, and bound so close to him by election, that they were to bespeak him at a different rate of fellowship and peremptoriness from all other mortals. And accordingly, they would utter themselves to him as if they were perfectly acquainted with all his counsels, knew his mind, and read over his decrees: and if need were, could advise him in many matters relating to the government of the world.

And therefore their usual dialect was, We know, Lord, that this and this is thy way of dealing with thy saints; and that thou canst not be angry with those whose heart is right with thee, though they may sometimes out of infirmity trip into a perjury, a murder, or an adultery. Nay, and they would tell God to his face, that he had revealed such a thing to them; when perhaps within two or three days the event proved clean contrary. When their armies were in their field, they would usually at home besiege God with such expressions, Lord, if thou shouldest forsake us thy peculiar inheritance, who are called by thy name, where wouldest thou find such another praying people? And again, Lord, thou mayest, out of anger to the nation, deliver thy chosen ones into the hands of their enemies, but consider what thou doest. It would be endless, and indeed unsavoury, to draw forth all the flowers of their profane rhetoric, with which they so liberally stuffed their impudent harangues, which they were pleased to call prayers.

And the rude familiarity of their expressions was attended with an equal rudeness of gesture and motion, throwing forth their arms, sweating, and carrying their whole bodies so, as if their prayer was indeed a "wrestling with God" without a metaphor. But it is strange that any should be able to persuade themselves that this should be zeal, and the proper fervour of devotion, when common sense and good manners generally prompt men to a greater wariness and restraint upon themselves in their appearance before an earthly superior. For no man shakes his prince by the hand, or accosts him with a Hail, fellow, well met. And if the laws and custom of nations will by no means endure such boldness to sovereign princes, for fear of debasing majesty, and so by degrees diminishing the commanding force of government, surely there ought to be more care used in managing our deportment toward God; since the impressions we have of things not seen by us, are more easily worn off, than those that are continually renewed upon the mind by a converse with visible objects. And that which will bring us into a contempt of our

earthly prince whom we see, is much more likely to bring us into a ~~light~~ esteem of our heavenly King, whom we have not seen. We are to use such words as may not only manifest, but also increase our reverence; we are, as I may so say, to keep our distance from God, in our very approaches to him. But such undue familiarity, as it does for the most part arise from contempt, so it always ends in it.

2dly. This irreverence in prayer shows itself in a man's venting his crude, sudden, extemporary conceptions before God. Why God should be pleased with that which intelligent men laugh at, I cannot understand. And there is nothing more loathsome and offensive to discreet ears, than the loose, indigested, incoherent babble, of some bold, self-opinioned persons, who in their talk are senseless and endless. Some indeed sanctify their unpremeditated way of speaking to God, by calling it "praying by the Spirit;" and so entitling the Holy Ghost to all their impertinencies, which is to excuse or defend boldness with blasphemy. But surely folly is no such difficult thing, that any man should need to fetch it from a supernatural cause, and owe his absurdities to immediate inspirations. For if this be to pray by the Spirit, a man needs only to forget himself, to balk the use of his reason, and to let his words fly at random, without care or observation, and he shall find very plentiful assistances of this nature.

But to vindicate the Spirit of God from these unworthy imputations, and withal to dash such impudent pretences, we are to know that the Spirit measures out his assistance to men in the use of the means proper for the effecting or accomplishing of any work; but suspends and denies that assistance, where the use of those means is neglected; for he cooperates with men according to the established course of working proper to their natures: and no man prays and preaches more by the Spirit, than he that bestows time and study in the orderly disposing of what he is to say; and so employs and exerts those faculties of mind which the Spirit of God endowed him with, for the better and more exact management of those holy services that he stands engaged in.

Were a man to petition his prince, or to plead at the bar for his life, I believe none could persuade him to venture the issue of so great an action upon his extempore gift. But admit that a man be never so well furnished with an ability of speaking suddenly and without premeditation; yet certainly premeditation and care would improve and heighten that ability, and give it a greater force and lustre in all performances. And if so, we are to remember that God calls for our best and our utmost; we are to bring the fairest and the choicest of our flock for an offering, and not to sacrifice a lame, unconcocted, wandering discourse to God, when our time and our parts are able to furnish us with one

much more accurate and exact. When a Roman gentleman invited Augustus Cæsar to supper, and provided him but a mean entertainment, Cæsar very properly took him up with an *Unde mihi tecum tanta familiaritas?* "Friend, pray how came you and I to be so familiar?" Great persons think themselves entertained with respect, when they are entertained with splendour; and they think wisely and rightly. In like manner God will reject such sons of presumption and impertinence with disdain, and though they took no time for the making of their prayers, yet he will take time enough before he will grant them.

But besides, to dismiss this supposition, it is indeed scarce possible, but much speaking without care or study must needs put the speaker upon unseemly repetitions, and tautologies, which Christ most peculiarly cautions his disciples against as a heathenish thing, in Matt. vi., where he prescribes them that excellent form of prayer, composed with so much fulness, strictness, and significancy of sense, that it is impossible for any thing that is extempore to resemble it. He that does not consider and weigh every word of his prayer, will find it very unfit to be weighed more severely by God himself in the balance of the sanctuary; who will account no man to speak piously, who does not also speak properly in his devotions. And therefore I shall conclude this particular with that most divine and excellent direction given by Solomon concerning this matter, Eccles. x. 2, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few." When we speak to a superior, to use words few and expressive is the proper dialect of respect.

And thus I have finished the first thing proposed for the handling of the words, which was to show that there was a certain confidence well becoming our humblest addresses to God, and withal to demonstrate what this confidence was; which I have done, by showing that it is such a one as stands opposed both to despair and doubting on the one hand, and to rashness and irreverence on the other.

II. I come now to the second particular, which is to show that the foundation of this confidence is laid in the mediation of Christ. Where there is a breach of amity between two persons, of which the offended person is much the superior, upon which account his dignity will not permit him to seek or offer a reconciliation; as on the other side, the inferior condition of him that is the offender will not let him dare to attempt one; it is manifest, that unless there be some third person to interpose between both, the breach must needs be perpetual and incurable. It was thus between God and man upon his apostasy from God: God was too great, too glorious immediately by himself to court his rebel



creature, and the creature too vile and obnoxious to treat with his sovereign: whereupon they must have both prepared for mutual acts of hostility, had not Christ, God and man, undertaken to mediate and comprise the difference on both sides; so that every sinner has cause to speak to Christ as the Israelites did to Moses, an eminent type of him: Speak thou unto us and for us too, and we will hear; but let not God the Father speak to us, or we to him, lest we die. A guilty person is but a bad advocate.

## SERMON XXIX.

### PART II.

#### THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST A MOTIVE TO CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER.

#### EPHESIANS III. 12.

*In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*

THE discussion of these words I shall manage in these two particulars.

First, I shall show that the confidence becoming a Christian, in his access to God by prayer, is founded upon the mediation of Christ.

Secondly, I shall inquire whether there be any other ground upon which this confidence may rationally found itself.

And first for the first of these, that the confidence becoming a Christian, in his access to God by prayer, is founded upon the mediation of Christ.

But now this dependence of our spiritual affairs upon Christ's mediation, will be yet more evidently set forth, in the discussion of the third particular :

III. Which is to show *the reason why Christ's mediation ought to minister such confidence to us in our access to God.* He that is confident in any action grounds his confidence upon the great probability of the happy issue and success of that action ; and that probability of success is grounded upon the fitness of the person entrusted with the management of it. In one word, therefore, the reason of grounding our confidence upon Christ's mediation, is the incomparable, singular fitness of Christ for the performance of that work ; which fitness will appear by considering him under a threefold relation or respect.

1. In respect of God, the person with whom he is to mediate.

2. In respect of men, the persons for whom he mediates.

3. In respect of himself, who discharges this office.

1. And first we shall consider him in relation to God, with whom he is to mediate ; who also in this business may sustain a double capacity in relation to Christ : (1.) Of a Father. (2.) Of a Judge.

(1.) And first if we consider him as his Father, there cannot

be a more promising ground of success in all his pleas for us. For who should be heard and prevail, if not a son pleading before his father? where the very nearness of the relation is a more commanding rhetoric than words and speeches can bestow upon a cause. Nature itself takes the cause in hand, and declaims it with more power and insinuation than the highest and the most persuasive oratory. To have the judge's ear is a great matter, but his son has his heart also. To be sure of an audience is a privilege that every advocate cannot attain to; but he may wait and wait, and at length go away unheard: and if perhaps he does obtain a hearing, yet he is not sure to carry it on without rubs and supercilious checks, that shall dishearten both his client and himself: he brings no advantage to the cause by his own person; so that if it succeeds, it must be upon the account of an invincible prevailing evidence of merit. It must in a manner be its own pleader. It must argue and set off itself, and without any assistances of favour, prevail entirely by the absolute victoriousness of truth.

But a good cause managed by an acceptable and a favoured person, it is like a sharp weapon wielded by a mighty arm, that enters deeper and further, being driven home by a double cause, its own keenness, and the other's strength. It is impossible indeed for the unchangeable rectitude of the divine nature to warp or deviate in the least manner from truth or justice, out of favour to persons. Yet where favour is consistent with justice, as oftentimes it may undoubtedly be, there the sonship of the advocate must needs facilitate and promote the cause. But however, admitting that favour can have no place in matters of this nature; yet it is a solid argument of comfort and encouragement to sinners, that their cause is in such hands as can reflect no prejudice or disadvantage upon it. Their advocate is not disgusted or obnoxious, and in need to plead for himself, before he can be in a capacity to be heard for his client. It is enough that, if there be any possibility of favour, they are sure of it; that they have an interest on their side, an interest founded upon the nearest and the dearest relation. They speak to the father by the mouth of his son, and what is more, of his only son: so that they may hope with the highest reason and argument; and to put an impossible supposition, though their cause should fall, yet their confidence is founded upon a rock.

(2.) We will consider God relating to Christ as a Judge. And here we will first represent to ourselves all that the office and severity of a judge can engage him to. We will consider him with all the rigours of justice, void of favour, inflexible, immovable, and exacting all by a strict rule; a rule that he will not in the least recede from; a rule admitting of no mitigation or dispensation; but awarding to all actions a recompence according to the most rigid and nice proportions of equality and

ment. We will consider him as clothing himself with all the terrors of mount Sinai, uttering a fiery law, that speaks nothing but death and a curse to the disobedient, and requires the forfeit of a soul for every transgression. Yet notwithstanding all this, we may with confidence rest ourselves upon the mediation of Christ with God, for these two reasons.

First, because he appears for us, not only as an advocate, but as a surety, paying down to God on our behalf the very utmost that his justice can exact. He suffered, he bled, he died for those for whom he intercedes; so that he brings satisfaction in one hand, while he presents a petition with another. He undertakes and pays the debt, and thereby cancels the bond; so that the law and justice itself have lost their hold of the sinner, and he is become a discharged and a justified person. And surely such a one may pray with confidence and hope for all the blessings of divine mercy, when his surety has cleared off all scores with his justice. He may take up the apostle's demand, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies," and he may add further, It is Christ that intercedes; Christ that brings a price for what he asks, that can plead a right; and, if need be, even appeal to God's justice.

But, secondly, we have yet another ground of building our confidence upon Christ's mediation with God, though considered as a judge; because he himself, has appointed him to this work: "It was he that laid help upon one that is mighty," as the psalmist says, Psalm lxxxix. 19, and "that made the man of his right hand, the Son of man, strong for himself," Psalm lxxx. 17. He prepared and endowed him with qualifications fit for so great an employment. Upon which account he is called the Christ, that is, the Anointed of God: for with the Jews, kings, priests, and prophets, that is, persons designed to the highest offices and charges, were initiated into them by the ceremony of anointing: whereupon Christ, who was to sustain all these offices, is said to have been "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows."

But now, if God thus constitutes Christ a mediator between himself and sinners, certainly it is an evident demonstration that he will hear and accept him in the management of that very work that he called him to and put him upon. No judge commands an advocate to speak, and when he speaks presently shuts his ears. This would be to contradict himself, and to mock the other: which God's truth and goodness will not suffer him to do. What Christ does in this matter, he does upon the very account of obedience, and has a call and a command to vouch for the success of his appearance, and therefore cannot be rejected or kept off as an intruder. He that bids another ask a thing of him, tells him in effect that he is resolved to grant it. He that invites, promises an admittance.

And thus I have shown Christ's fitness for the work of media-

tion, in respect of God, and that considered either as a Father or as a Judge.

2. In the next place we are to consider his fitness for this work in reference to men, for whom he mediates; which will appear from that fourfold relation that he bears to them. (1.) Of a friend. (2.) Of a brother. (3.) Of a surety. (4.) Of a lord and master.

(1.) And first let us look upon him as a friend; that is, as one that we may trust with our nearest concerns as freely as ourselves. And Christ has solemnly owned this relation to all believers: so that we may with the greatest cheerfulness and assurance commit the presenting of our petitions to him, whose care and solicitousness for the success of them will be the same with ours. Friendship is an active and a venturous thing, and where it is real, it will make a man bolder and more importunate for his friend than for himself. Now Christ has all the perfections of human friendship, without the flaws and weaknesses of it: and surely he will bestow a prayer for those for whom he would spend a life. Though the presence of God is terrible to behold, and his anger much more terrible to feel, yet Christ has declined neither of them, but made his way to the former by a resolute undergoing of the latter.

Many men will indeed profess themselves to be friends, and expect to be accounted so: but if at any time they are desired to speak a good word to a great person in the behalf of one to whom they have made all these professions, they will desire to be excused; they must not spend and lavish away an interest upon other people's advantages, but reserve it fresh and entire for themselves.

Sad were the condition of sinners, should the friendship of Christ show itself at this rate. A friend in the court of heaven would do them but little good, that would not so much as befriend them with a word. But Christ is interceding for us night and day; presenting our prayers to the Father, and making them effectual by his own.

(2.) Let us consider Christ as a brother, and so we have a further cause to repose a confidence in him, in point of his mediation for us. For although it does not always fall out that the nearest relations are the best friends, yet it is a fault that they are not so; and therefore we may be sure that Christ, who cannot commit a fault, cannot but equal the nearness of the relation he bears to us with a proportionable measure of affection. He is the Son of God by nature, and because we cannot be so too, he has made us so by adoption: John i. 12, "To as many as received him, he gave power to become the sons of God." So that he has even united us into one family with himself: Eph. iii. 15, "By whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Nay, and to advance the relation yet nearer, because

it was impossible for dust and ashes to aspire to a participation of the divine nature, he was pleased to descend to the assumption of ours, and to become the Son of man, not by adoption only, but really and naturally: to be "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh;" to own the same human affections, and, in a word, not to decline our very infirmities. Which being so, we may very well own all that confidence of succeeding through the mediation of Christ, that the fidelity of a friend and the dearness of a brother may administer to us. For should a brother prevaricate and prove false, nature itself would seem to fly in his face, and upbraid his unhuman perfidiousness. Society would mark him out as a common enemy to mankind, and unfit for converse.

Brotherhood unites persons by a certain tie, that is not only forcible but sacred; and to violate it by any falseness or treachery of behaviour, is to injure not only a man, but even humanity itself. And therefore whatsoever business any one puts into his brother's hands, he counts as secure as if it were in his own. And we may be sure that Christ will be as much more concerned for our affairs than an earthly brother, as such a brother would be more than an ordinary acquaintance.

(3.) Let us consider Christ as our surety; and so we shall find the same, if not a greater cause, of being confident of him as our mediator. It is not every friend, nor every brother, that will be a surety; since the love that must raise one to undertake this even amongst men, must be a love greater than he bears to himself: for he that ventures to be a surety for another, ventures an undoing for his sake; and there is not any thing less to be wondered at in common life, than to see such persons undone: so that nothing is more certain in human affairs, than that assertion of Solomon, that "he that hateth suretiship is sure." But the debt that Christ was our surety for, was as much greater than the greatest that befalls men in worldly matters, as eternity is greater than time, as heaven is above earth, and the executions of an infinite wrath above the slight, weak revenges of a mortal power. "He bore our iniquities," Isaiah liii., and placed himself before the justice of his Father, as responsible for all that the law could charge us with: and being made thus obnoxious by his own free choice, "wrath came upon him to the uttermost:" he drank off the cup of God's fury, and squeezed out the very dregs. All this he did in our stead, in our room, in our persons, whom he represented in all that great action.

And now, after such an experiment of his love to us, can we doubt that he will stick at the lesser and lower instances of kindness? that he will refuse to manage and enforce our petitions at the throne of grace, who did not refuse to make himself an offering to justice? We may rest assured that he will not be wanting to the prosecution of our interest, who, by the very office that he has undertaken, has made our interest his own.

(4.) And lastly, for the further confirmation of our confidence in our addresses to God, we will consider Christ under a very different relation from all the former, and that is as he is our lord and master. *Majestas et amor*, sovereignty and love, as the poet observes, do but ill cohabit in the same breast; and the truth is, love prompts to service, and sovereignty imports dominion; and so proceed in a very contrary strain. Yet Christ has united them both in himself: for as he is the most absolute of lords, so he is the best and the most faithful of friends, the kindest brother, and the ablest surety. Nay, and he has founded our friendship and our subjection to him, things very different, upon the same bottom; which is, obedience to his laws; John xv. 14, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." And elsewhere he tells us of the homage we owe him in John xiii. 13, "Ye call me Lord and Master: and ye do well; for so I am." But this relation, though it speaks superiority and distance, yet it imports also kindness and protection. For what master is there, of a worthy and a generous spirit, that does not espouse the interest and good of his servant, and esteem himself answerable for it as for a trust, which all the principles of religion, humanity, and good-nature will call him to an account for?

Christ shows sufficiently how far he owns himself concerned for his servants, where he declares, that he looks upon every courtesy or injury done to the least of them as done to himself, in Matt. xxv. 45. And as he owns them before men, so he is not ashamed to acknowledge them before his Father in heaven; to further their prayers, to endear their persons, to recommend their services, and, in a word, to be their constant, indefatigable intercessor.

Now, under this relation of *lord*, I suppose we may consider that also by which Christ owns himself for our *head*; than which there cannot be one more peculiarly fitted to encourage us in the business of prayer. For when any of the members are aggrieved, or ill at ease, it is the head that must complain and cry out for relief. Nor needs it any intelligence from the afflicted part; but it feels it by a quick sympathy, and utters what it feels by a kind of necessity. And it is as impossible for an arm or a leg to be broken, and the head to be unconcerned, as for any member of the mystical body of Christ to be under a pressing calamity, and for Christ the head not to be sensible of that misery, and to vent his sense of it by a vigorous intercession with his Father for its removal.

And thus I have shown those four relations that Christ bears to believers; every one of which is a pregnant and a forcible argument for us to depend upon his mediation for the success of our prayers and the acceptance of our persons, in all our addresses to the Father.

3. I come now in the third and last place, to demonstrate the

fitness of Christ to be a mediator for us, by considering him in respect of himself, and those qualifications inherent in him, which so particularly qualify and dispose him for this work: of which I shall mention and insist upon three.

(1.) That he is perfectly acquainted with all our wants and necessities.

(2.) That he is heartily sensible of, and concerned about them.

(3.) That he is best able to express and set them forth to the Father.

(1.) And for the first of these, his acquaintance with our condition: we need not spend much time or labour to inform our advocate of our case: for his omniscience is beforehand with us: he knows all our affairs, and what is more, our hearts, better than we ourselves. And it is our happiness that he does so: for by this means he is able to supply the defects of our prayers, and to beg those things for us that our ignorance was not aware of. And what is yet a greater advantage, he is upon this account able also to correct our prayers. For such is the shortness of our understanding, and the weakness of our affections, that we pray sometimes for those things that would prove our bane and our destruction: we beg heartily for a mischief, and importune God to be so favourable as to ruin us at our desire. In which case surely it concerns us to have somebody to counter-petition us, and to ask a fish while we are begging for a serpent; and to be so kind to us as to keep our prayers from being granted.

A man perhaps is visited with sickness, and passing his days in pain and languishing, puts up many a hearty prayer to God to restore him to health and ease; but all this time he is ignorant of the end and design of this visitation: for possibly the distemper of his body is every day ministering to the cure of his soul, to the mortification of his pride, his lust, and worldly-mindedness: and perhaps God, who foresees all accidents, and knows upon what little wheels and hinges the events of things move, understands assuredly that his sickness removes him out of harm's way, and secures him from those peculiar occasions of sin, that, being well and healthful, he would inevitably fall into, and perhaps deplorably fall by. But now Christ has a full comprehension of all these possibilities, and knows what would promote and what would annoy every man in his spiritual estate: he knows when sickness will set a man nearer to heaven than health can do; when poverty, banishment, and affliction, subserve the purposes of grace, and the great interests of eternity, better than all the affluence of fortune, the highest preferments, and the most undisturbed prosperity.

As it is a happiness for some men not to be left to their own choice, but to resign themselves up to the guidance and disposal of one of greater experience; so it is the safest course for many not to be permitted to stand or fall according to their own prayers.



For it is not always piety or discretion that indites them, but an impatience of some present grievance, or a passionate desire of some earthly enjoyment, affections that in many circumstances border too near upon sin: and therefore the prayers that proceed from them are never granted by God but in anger, and with an intent to punish and to blast the person that makes them. Such prayers are never seconded or backed by Christ's intercession, unless for the begging of their pardon, and excusing their folly and their unfitness; and then God may be said most graciously to hear them, when for the mediation of Christ he pardons and denies them: which mediation of his takes its measures of acting, not by our desires, but our wants; of which he is the most competent judge, as being more privy to them than our very consciences; for they may be deceived and deluded, but he cannot. And thus much for the first thing that qualifies Christ to be our Mediator, that he knows every thing belonging to our spiritual estate certainly and infallibly.

(2.) The second is, that he is heartily sensible of, and concerned about whatsoever concerns us. Without which his knowledge would avail us but little. For the bare knowing of a thing engages no man to act in it. And therefore Christ is represented to us as one that is touched with the sense of our infirmities, as sharing our griefs, and bearing a part in our sorrows; which very thing renders him a merciful high priest, and ready to intercede for us with the same vehemence and importunity, that by a personal endurance of those miseries he might be prompted to for himself. He that would speak earnestly and forcibly of any thing, must work it into his heart by a lively and a keen sense of it, as well as into his head by a clear knowledge and apprehension. For where the heart is engaged, all the actions follow: no part or power of the soul can be unactive, when that is stirred; and being once moved itself, it moves all the rest.

Now it is the heart of Christ that every believer has an interest in: and we know that he carries that in his breast that intercedes for us with him, as well as he with the Father. He does not only hear our sighs, but also feels the cause of them: and if we suffer by the direct impressions of pain, he also suffers by the movings and yearnings of his own compassion: so that in a manner our relief is his own ease; and that deliverance that disburdens our minds, does also by consequence discharge his.

When he was to leave the world, we read how sensible he was of the disconsolate condition of his disciples; and that he promised to send the Spirit to them for no cause more than to be their Comforter; and to allay those sorrows that upon his departure he foresaw would fill their hearts: he seemed actually to feel their grief, while it was yet but future, and to come: that is, before they could have any feeling of it themselves. This

concernment therefore of his for us, is another thing that greatly fits him for the office of a Mediator.

3. The third and last is, his transcendent and more than human ability to express and set forth every thing that may be pleaded in our behalf to the best advantage; which is the peculiar qualification of a good advocate, and that which makes the two former considerable. For admit that he knows both his client's cause, and is heartily and warmly concerned for it, yet if his tongue and his eloquence doth not serve him to draw forth those thoughts and those affections in a suitable defence of it, he is rather a good man and a good friend, than a good advocate or mediator. But now is there any one that may compare with Christ in respect of this faculty? to whom God has given "the tongue of the wise;" a tongue speaking with authority, commanding men, and persuading God: nay, and who himself was able to give his disciples such a tongue, as all their adversaries, though never so learned and eloquent, were not able to resist. That prayer that perhaps is by much ado sighed and sobbed out by the penitent, his grief interrupting his words, yet as it arrives to the throne of God from the mouth of our Mediator, it comes with a grace and force superior to all human rhetoric; it enters the presence and pierces the ears of the Almighty; and, in a word prevails in that manner, as if it were almighty itself.

And here I cannot but observe, how the qualities of Christ as our mediator pleading for us do particularly mate and confront those of the devil our grand adversary pleading against us. For as Christ is most knowing of our spiritual estate, and every thing relating to it; so is the devil most industrious and inquisitive to give himself an exact information of the same. As Christ is most tenderly concerned for us, so is the devil most maliciously and inveterately set against us. And, lastly, as Christ has all the strengths and treasures of elocution to employ in our defence, so is the devil restless and artificial in drawing up our charge and accusation with all the heightening, aggravating language, that a great wit and a redundant malice can afford. But in all this he is outdone; even as much as the Creator can outdo a creature: so that we need not use any further elogy of Christ's mediatorship than this, that he is a greater and a more potent advocate, than the devil himself can be an accuser.

And thus I have at length demonstrated the eminent fitness of Christ for the office of mediator, upon a treble account or respect; namely, in respect of God, of us, and of himself: and so have finished the third particular proposed for the handling of the words; which was, to show the reason why Christ's mediation ought to minister such confidence to us in our access to God.

## SERMON XXX.

### PART III.

#### THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST A MOTIVE TO CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER.

#### EPHESIANS III. 12.

*In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*

THE prosecution of these words was first cast into the discussion of these four particulars.

I. That there is a certain boldness or confidence very well consisting with and becoming of our humblest addresses to God.

II. That the foundation of this confidence is laid in the mediation of Christ.

III. To show the reason why the mediation of Christ ought to minister such confidence to us in our access to God.

IV. And lastly, to show whether there were any other ground that might rationally embolden us in these our addresses to him?

Having finished the first three of these, I proceed now to the fourth. What reason we have to raise a confidence about the success of our prayers, upon the mediation of Christ, has been already declared; but since we cannot have too many pillars for so great a superstructure to lean upon, it will not be amiss to see whether there be any other means to give efficacy and success to them. If there is, it must be either, 1. Something within; or, 2. Something without us.

As for any thing within us that may thus prevail with God, it must be presumed to be the merit of our good actions, which by their intrinsic worth and value may lay claim to his acceptance. It cannot, I confess, be the direct business of this discourse to treat of the merit of good works. But for our direction, so far as may concern the present subject and occasion, I affirm, that it is impossible, not only for sinful men, but for any mere creature, though of never so excellent and exalted a nature, properly to merit any thing from God, and that briefly for these two reasons.

1st. Because none can merit of another but by doing something of himself and absolutely by his own power, for the advantage of him from whom he merits, without that person's help or

assistance. But what can any thing that the creature can do advantage God? What can all the men and angels contribute or add to the divine happiness or perfection? And if we should suppose that any action of theirs might, yet it could not be meritorious, forasmuch as they do every thing by a power and an ability conveyed to them by God; so that in their most refined and holiest performances, they offer God but what is his own, the effect and product of his grace working within them, and raising them to do what they do. The talent they trade with was given them, nay, and what is more, the very power of trading with it was given them too: so that both in their being and operations they are another's, and stand accountable for all to a superior bounty; and restitution surely is not merit.

2dly. To merit is to do something over and above what is due, no two things in the world being more directly contrary than debt and merit. But now it is impossible for any created agent to do any thing above its duty, forasmuch as its duty obliges it to do the utmost that it can. It is clear therefore that for any one, even the brightest angel in heaven, to think of meriting, is but a dream and a chimera; but then for us, who are obnoxious upon the account of several sins and breaches of the law, to entertain the least thought of it, is much more absurd and intolerable; and consequently, if we build any confidence in our addresses to God upon our merits, we build upon the sand; and what the issue of such a building is like to be, we may easily conclude.

It remains therefore that if there be any other ground of this confidence, it must be something without us. And if so, it must be the help and intercession either, 1. Of the angels; or, 2. Of the saints.

1. And first for the angels: that they cannot be presumed to mediate for us and present our prayers before God, I suppose may be evident by these reasons.

(1.) Because it is impossible for the angels to know and perfectly discern the thoughts, that being the incommunicable property of God; 2 Chron. vi. 30, "Thou only, O Lord, knowest the hearts of the children of men;" and in Jer. xvii. 10, "I the Lord search the heart." But now many prayers are wholly transacted within the mind and the heart, and pass not into any outward expression. And even in those prayers that are orally delivered, that which is the chief part, and indeed the soul of prayer, is the inward disposition of the heart; which falls under the cognizance of no created understanding, it being the peculiar royalty and prerogative of omniscience.

(2.) The second reason is, that it also exceeds the measure of angelical knowledge, for any angel by himself and his own natural power of knowing, to know at once all the prayers that are even uttered in words here and there throughout the world; and that

because it is impossible for him to be actually present in all places. For though the knowledge of angels is not limited just to the things of that place where they are present, yet it is certain that it cannot extend much further; since a limited nature must needs also have a limited way of knowing. Upon which account God's omniscience is not ill founded by some upon his essential omnipresence, as the ground and reason of it. For he that is intimately present to all things, must needs have a knowledge of those things, which persons that are not thus present to them, for the same cause, are not capable of.

But for all this, some concern themselves to hold a contrary opinion about the knowledge of angels, and they pretend to ground it, 1. partly upon scripture: 2. partly upon reason.

And first as to what they produce from scripture, passing by most of their frivolous and impertinent quotations, I shall more especially single out and insist upon two, as being the most likely to speak to their purpose.

(1.) The first of them is that in Luke xv. 10, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." From whence they argue, that repentance being a thing chiefly situate in the heart, if the angels can know this, they must needs know the heart also.

But to this I answer, that repentance is not only immediately knowable in itself, but also mediately, by the outward effects of it showing themselves in the life of the penitent; such as in Matt. iii. are called "fruits meet for repentance;" which whether they be sincere and genuine or no, though we perhaps cannot always discern, yet the angels, whose discernment is much greater, may well be thought able to understand and distinguish.

But it will be urged in the second place, that though it follows not from hence that the angels can discern the heart, or the repentance of a sinner as it lies included there, yet by granting that they know and observe the outward effects of repentance, it will follow, that by the same reason they must also know all those prayers that men utter and express outwardly by word of mouth. And therefore that as to these at least we may presume that they will be our mediators, to present them for us to God.

For reply to this I answer, that it was sufficiently proved by the former argument, that the angelical knowledge cannot at the same time naturally reach itself to all things that actually happen in the world; and that for the reason then given, that an angel, being of a limited nature, cannot be actually present every where. But you will ask then, how come the angels to know the repentance of every converted sinner? Why; it must be supposed that they know it by report of those angels that God has employed as ministering spirits about that repenting person; and consequently it is not necessary that we affirm it to be universally known to all the angels in heaven, but to those only, who by converse with

these come to have such a report conveyed to them ; for the text speaks only of the angels indefinitely, but not of all universally.

But upon this it may be replied further, that upon the same ground we may infer also, that the angels may know all the prayers orally put up by men throughout the whole world ; forasmuch as they may be signified to them by the like reports from those angels that have the respective care and governance of each person.

To this I answer, that it is indeed possible that they may, but that they also do, we have no ground to conclude. For although God has told us, that so eminent and remarkable a passage as the conversion of a sinner is known to the angels in heaven, whether by particular revelation from himself, or by report from other angels, it matters not ; yet that therefore every action done by, or occurrence relating to such a one, must also be reported and made known to the angels too, no reason or argument can demonstrate. And unless we know that these things certainly are so, as well as that possibly they may, they can administer no sure ground to our confidence, as shall be made appear in its due place.

But after all this discourse, what if we should now affirm, that there is no necessity of our holding, that the angels know the repentance of every sinner here on earth, either by themselves or by the reports of others. For when it is said, that "there is joy amongst the angels in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," is it said, that this joy happens just about the time of that repentance, or at any time of the sinner's abode in this world? No ; we find no mention of the time, and therefore what hinders but that it may be understood of the time when the penitent enters into heaven : that then there is joy amongst the angels, who rejoice that he repented and is recovered, which repentance they then come clearly to see and know, in the visible consequent of it, his salvation. This I am sure may be the sense of the text without any force done to it at all ; and if it may, there is no necessity of the former interpretation, upon a removal of which there cannot be so much as any colour or show of argument from hence to evince the angels' knowledge of every particular man's actions and affairs here upon earth. And thus much in answer to their first scripture.

(2.) The other is that place in Rev. viii. 3, "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer ; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar that was before the throne." From whence they say it is evident, that the angels are employed in presenting our prayers to God, nay, so invincibly evident in the judgment of some, that they wonder that any should be able to stand out against the prevailing force of it.

But to this I answer, that *angel* is a name not only of nature, but also of office; and signifies one peculiarly sent and employed by God about any work: upon which account Christ is several times in scripture called "the angel of the Lord," "the angel of the covenant;" and simply without any addition, "the angel," as in Zechariah i. Accordingly in this sense is the word *angel* to be taken here, namely for Christ; to whom also the other words most appositely agree; the incense here mentioned very fitly representing the merits of his death and sufferings, by which he offered himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, by virtue of which sacrifice he is continually giving an efficacy to our prayers before the throne of grace. If therefore the angel here spoken of be Christ, and Christ be God as well as man, nothing for the mediation of any created angel can be concluded from this text.

And thus having answered what they allege from scripture for the angels' knowledge of and concernment about men's particular actions here upon earth, and especially their prayers, I shall now come to examine what they allege for the same from reason.

2dly. They argue therefore that the angels see and know our prayers, and every thing else belonging to us, because they behold the face of God, the divine essence; which essence containing in itself the exact ideas and representations of all things, by beholding that they must by consequence behold and view all things else.

This is frequently urged and insisted upon, and yet there cannot be a more false and absurd reasoning. For if this were true, then it would follow that whosoever saw God, would be also omniscient and know as much as God himself knows, since he knows all things by the survey of his own essence. It would follow also that there could be no possibility of God's revealing any thing to the angels: for how can any thing be said to be revealed that was known before? But yet Christ tells us, that the angels are ignorant of the day of judgment, Matt. xxiv. 36; and St. Peter tells us concerning the mysteries of Christ's incarnation and man's redemption, that "the angels desire to look into them," 1 Pet. i. 12; and the word *παρακύψαι* in the original is most emphatical, as signifying a *stooping down to look* into a thing, which is a searching, inquisitive posture: and therefore surely the angels are capable of a further knowledge of these things by a revelation of them from God, and consequently cannot see all things in the divine essence.

But that we may answer and remove the very ground of this reasoning, we are to consider, that the divine essence discovers itself, and what is in it, to those that behold it, not by any natural necessity, as a sensible object lays itself open to the eye, but voluntarily and freely, as the mind of one man discovers itself to

another, and as we may presume one angel declares his thoughts to another. Add to this also, that the other supposition of the ideas and images of all things existing in the essence of God, seems but a mere fiction, framed only according to our gross way of apprehending things, and so by no means strictly and literally agreeable to the most spiritual, simple, uncompounded nature of God.

From both which it follows, that that device of *speculum Trinitatis*, "the glass of the Trinity," in which they say that saints and angels behold all things, is a most senseless and ridiculous conceit; and I wonder that any persons of reason and learning should be ever brought to lay any weight upon it. For if this be a good argument, that he that sees him who sees all things, must himself also see all things; then by unavoidable consequence, this will be as good, that he that sees him who sees nothing, must also himself see nothing. And then any angel may be omniscient and blind in a minute: for let him look upon God who sees all things, and then he is omniscient and sees all things himself; but let him immediately after look upon a blind man, and then by a wonderful transmutation presently he sees nothing. But the truth is, such ways of discoursing are fitter to be drolled upon, than to be refuted by any serious answer.

And thus I have shown, that we have no ground to repose any confidence in the mediation of angels, for the promoting of our petitions before God.

2. I come now to see whether we have any greater ground of confidence from any thing that the saints are like to do for us in this particular. Concerning which we must observe, that the foregoing arguments brought against the angels interceding for us, by reason of their unacquaintance with our spiritual affairs, proceed much more forcibly against the intercession of the saints, who are of much more limited and restrained faculties than the angels, and know fewer things, and even those that they do know in a much lesser degree of clearness than the angelical knowledge rises to.

But yet for the further proof of the saints' unacquaintedness with what is done here below, these reasons may be added over and above.

As first, it is clear that God sometimes takes his saints out of the world for this very cause, that they may not see and know what happens in the world. For so says God to king Josiah, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 28, "Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and the inhabitants thereof." Which discourse would have been hugely absurd and inconsequent, if so be the saints' separation from the body gave them a fuller and a clearer prospect into all the particular affairs and occurrences that happen here upon earth.



But if they are ignorant of these, as this scripture sufficiently proves, then can there no reason be assigned, why we should not also judge them ignorant of our prayers.

Some indeed are not ashamed to say, that God reveals the prayers of men here below to the saints above, that they may present those prayers to him; which assertion as it is utterly groundless, so it is also apparently absurd. For to what purpose should God reveal a prayer made to him, to any of the saints, that he might pray it over to him again? Can he make the matter plainer and more evident to God than it was before? Or can he add merit and value to it, when it is impossible for any creature to merit from God? Or lastly, can he prevail with God more than God's own mercy and Christ's intercession? Thus when men first take up an opinion, and then afterwards seek for reasons for it, they must be contented with such as the absurdity of it will afford.

But secondly, we have yet further an express declaration of the saints' ignorance of the state of things here below in those words in Isaiah lxiii. 16, where the church thus utters itself to God, "Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not." Abraham and Jacob surely were saints, and those too none of the lowest rank; yet it seems they knew nothing of the condition of their posterity, understood none of their wants and necessities. And if so, how they should pray and be concerned for those of whom they had no knowledge, is hard to comprehend.

But notwithstanding these places, the sons of the Romish communion are taught to believe otherwise; and accordingly allege several things, which they are pleased to think, or at least to call arguments to the contrary: the foundation of most of which being overthrown by what has been disputed about the angels, I shall only mention two more, the first from scripture, the second, as they pretend, from reason.

(1.) As for scripture, they allege Luke xvi., where Abraham a beatified saint in heaven, could yet know the estate and hear the words of the rich man in hell; as also what befell him and Lazarus in their lifetime, as that "one received good things, and the other evil things;" from whence they say it is clear, that the saints in heaven know the condition of those that live here, and consequently may be thought particularly to intercede for them.

But to this I answer, first, that supposing this to be a real history, and literally to be understood, yet this proves no more, than that Abraham might come to know from Lazarus, after his assumption into heaven, what the condition of that rich man was, as also what miseries he himself lay under, during his life: but that is no argument that Abraham knew any thing of this, while Lazarus and the rich man were yet living upon earth. But in the second place we are to know, that this whole relation is but

a parable, and so cannot be argumentative for the proof of any thing.

(2.) Their next argument, which is drawn from reason, proceeds thus: that if the saints here upon earth pray for one another, then certainly those in heaven, whose charity is more perfect and consummate, must be thought much more to pray for those here below. But the former is evident from several examples, and there is also an express command for it, in James v. 16.

To this I answer first, that the charity of the saints who live in this world putting them to pray for one another, does not infer, that the saints in heaven (whose charity is greater) must do so too, unless it were proved that the charity of a glorified person must needs have the very same way of acting and exerting itself in heaven, that it had in the same person while he was a member of the church militant here on earth.

But in the second place, not to deny wholly that the charity of the blessed souls prompts them to pray for those that live yet in the body, we may distinguish of a twofold intercession of the saints, 1. General, 2. Particular. The general is that by which the saints pray for the good and happiness of the whole body of the church, which they well know upon a general account, during its warfare in this world, to be surrounded with temptations, and so in need of the continual assistance of divine grace; whereupon their charity may well engage them thus to pray for it. But as for any particular intercession, by which any saint intercedes in the behalf of any particular person here below, recommending his personal case to God, this follows not from the former; for it has been proved that they know not these particularities, and if so, though they be in never so high a degree charitable, yet their charity is not to outrun their knowledge.

Now in order to any man's establishing a rational confidence upon the intercession of the saints for us, these three things are required: 1. That they be able thus to intercede for us. 2. That they accordingly will. 3. And lastly, that a man certainly know so much. A failure in any of which conditions renders all such hope and reliance upon them most absurd and unreasonable. For what foundation of hope can there be, where there is no power to help? And what help can he afford me, who knows not whether I need help or no? But suppose that he does fully know my condition, yet knowledge is not the immediate principle of action, but will; and no man goes about the doing of any thing because he knows it may be done, but because in his mind he has resolved to do it. And then as for the saints' will to pray for us, since the measure of their will is the will of God calling and commanding them to undertake such or such a work, where there is no such call or command to the thing we are speaking of, we are to presume also, that neither have they any will to it. But lastly, admitting that there is in them really

both a knowledge, and an actual will fitting the saints for this office of interceding, yet unless we are sure of it by certain infallible arguments, we cannot build our practice upon it, which is itself to be built upon faith, that is a firm persuasion of both the reasonableness and the fitness of the thing that we are to do. But now what arguments have we to ascertain us of the saints' ability and proneness to intercede for us? We have weighed what has been brought from scripture and from reason, and found it wanting; so that we have nothing solid to bottom ourselves upon in this matter. But God requires that our boldness should commence upon knowledge, for he neither approves the sacrifice nor the confidence of fools.

And now in the last place, if we view this doctrine in the consequence of it, we shall find that it speaks aloud against the folly and impiety of a practice so much used by some, namely, the invocation of saints, and praying to the souls of holy men departed this life. It is possible indeed that men may believe that the saints in heaven particularly intercede for men here below, and yet not hold that they are to be prayed to: but it is certain, that none hold that the saints ought to be prayed to, who deny their particular intercession with God for us. All the arguments therefore that have been hitherto produced for the disproving of this, do by consequence utterly destroy the invocation of the saints.

But before I examine any of their arguments for it, it will not be amiss to consider the original grounds of this practice; of which I think I may reckon these three for the principal.

First, the solemn meetings used by the primitive Christians at the places of the saints' sepulchres, and there celebrating the memory of their martyrdom. In which panegyric speeches there were used frequent apostrophes and figurative addresses to the souls of the saints, as if they were actually present and heard what was spoken: and these expressions the vulgar, not being able to distinguish between things spoken figuratively and properly, easily drank in according to the literal meaning of the words; though indeed they no more proved that the saints heard them, or that those that so spoke thought they did, than those exclamations, "Hear, O heaven, and hearken, O earth!" prove that the heaven and earth can hear what is thus spoken to them.

The second thing that induced this belief, were those seeds of the Platonic philosophy, that so much leavened many of the primitive Christians: which philosophy teaches, that the souls of good and virtuous men after the decease of the body are turned into angels or good demons, and fly about the world helping men, and defending them from evils and mishaps: whereupon it was easy with a little change to transfer and apply these things to the souls of the saints. For the confirmation of which it is re-

markable that Origen, a person excessively addicted to the philosophy of Plato, was the first of the Christians that brought this opinion into the church: though it was long after his time that the invocation of the saints came to be practised; the practice beginning first amongst the Greek eremites, who transfused it to Nyssen, Basil, and Nazianzen; their great admirers and disciples; who afterwards made a shift to insinuate it into the minds of the credulous vulgar.

The third cause of this was the people's being bred in idolatry: whereupon what worship they gave to devils and to their heroes before, they very readily applied upon their conversion to Christianity to good angels, and to the souls of the martyrs; which also the unweariness and facility of many of their teachers and bishops was willing enough to humour them in, as being desirous upon any terms to gain them from heathenism to the profession of Christian religion; and being also in those times otherwise taken up and busied with disputes against such heretics as more directly struck at the foundations of Christianity.

But nothing can be more evident than that the primitive fathers of the church held no such thing as the invocation of the saints, and that from this one consideration, that they still used this as an argument against the Arians for the proof of the deity of Christ, that he was to be invoked and prayed unto. Which worship, might it have been communicated to the saints, or any besides God, had been no proof of the thing for which they brought it at all.

And moreover, the weak grounds that the patrons of this opinion have found for it in scripture, have been the cause, that even those that hold and practise it cannot yet unanimously agree about the terms upon which they are to hold it. For some will have invocation of the saints necessary, some pious and profitable, and others only lawful or allowable. And the council of Trent, that pretended to determine the case, has been so wise as to put the world off with an ambiguity that might indifferently serve the defenders of either opinion, by denouncing an anathema against those *qui negant sanctos invocandos esse*, who deny that the saints were to be prayed to. Which expression is very ambiguous: for to deny that the saints are to be prayed to, may signify either to deny that it is necessary to pray to them, or that it is lawful to pray to them. But the truth is, it is their best course to state it upon this, that it is useful and profitable. Profitable, I say, not to those that practise, but to those that teach and assert it.

But since the practice has now prevailed amongst those of the Romish communion, let us see what reason they allege for it. Why, they argue from the custom used in the courts of princes, where petitioners presume not to petition their prince immediately by themselves, but by the intercession of such as attend about him.

But to this pretence, which, as St. Ambrose affirms in his comment upon the 1st of the Romans, and St. Austin in his 8th book *De Civitate Dei*, was the very same that the heathens alleged for their worshipping of good demons and their heroes; that is, famous men departed this life, and supposed by them to have attained a state or condition of being and power next to their gods. To this I say, this is a full answer, that God is not man, nor are we in all things to argue the manner of our behaviour to God from what we use to men. God will himself determine the way by which he will be worshipped; and, consequently, the only rule of the worship we tender him must be his own prescription and command.

But besides, let the comparison be put equally, and so even upon these terms their argument will not proceed. For should even an earthly prince constitute and appoint one certain person to receive all petitions, and bring them to him, surely it would be an arrogance to presume to petition him by the mediation of any other. Now God has actually constituted Christ our mediator, and our sole mediator, which appears from that one text, which the patrons of praying to the saints will never solidly answer, 1 Tim. ii. 5, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Upon which account, for us to put our prayers into any other hands, is to affront God in his command, and Christ in his office.

If it be here further alleged, that our sins render us very unworthy to come immediately even to Christ himself; whereupon it is but a due humility for us to make our way to him by the mediation of his friends, such as the blessed saints are.

To this also I answer, that Christ, who knew better than we ourselves, whether we were fit to come to him or no, has expressly commanded us to come: in which case we are to learn, that the best and most refined humility is obedience: and when Christ commands us to come to him, and with the jealousy almost of a rival forbids us all address to others, if we repair to any but himself, it is "the sacrifice of fools," seasoned with ignorance and wilfulness; and not so much a veneration of his majesty, as a despal of his mercy. For should any noble or great person command me personally to represent my wants immediately to himself, surely it would be but little modesty or civility in me to present my petitions to him by the intercession of his porter.

As for those that judge or practise otherwise, there is this only to be alleged for the reasonableness of what they do; that having so much injured Christ the great mediator, it is not to be wondered (should we respect their behaviour, and not his mercy) if they stand in need of a mediator to Christ himself. But as gold upon gold is absurd in heraldry; so I am sure, a mediator to a mediator is a greater absurdity in Christianity.

I conclude, therefore, that Christ is the only person through

whose mediation we may with confidence make our access to God : and that to share this work of mediation with any, either saints or angels, is an injurious and sacrilegious encroachment upon that office, that neither admits of equal nor companion. It is also a senseless invention, grounded upon that which is not ; namely, their particular knowledge of our affairs here below : and if it were not so, yet is the practice hugely useless and superfluous ; for there cannot be imagined any kindness or concernment in the saints for us, that is not infinitely greater and more abundant in Christ. And therefore let men please themselves as they will in their imaginary, fantastic by-ways of address, yet Christ is the only true way, the way that has light to direct, and life to reward those that walk in it ; and consequently there is “ no coming to the Father but by him.”

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

## SERMON XXXI.

### THE DANGER OF RESISTING THE SPIRIT.

#### GENESIS VI. 3.

*And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man.*

IN this chapter we have God taking a survey of the state of the sons of men before the flood; and withal we have the judgment or verdict that he delivers in upon that survey, namely, that they were exceeding wicked; as in verse 5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth." We have him in the first chapter looking over all created beings, and thereupon pronouncing his approbation of them, that "behold, they were good," and hear no further of them: in the sixth chapter, we have man, that of all those good things should have in reason proved the best, totally corrupt and depraved; as appears from the same verse, "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil, and only evil, and that continually." So that we see his sins were as numerous as his thoughts, and withal so great, that it even "repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth;" as we read in verse 6. Sin is of so vile and provoking a nature, that it is able to extort a certain kind of repentance from God himself, who has elsewhere said, that he cannot repent: so that here we see God himself repenting, by reason of the sins of men: but of the sinner's repentance we read not a word. Now when sins are arrived to their highest pitch, both in respect of number and greatness; and withal attended with an absolute impenitence; what in reason can remain but a certain sad expectation of judgment against the sinner? And such a one we have here. After the overflowing of sin upon the whole earth, God in his justice seconds it with a deluge of waters; and so proportions his punishment to the rate of the offence; a general destruction to a general sin. But before the execution of this judgment, and amidst those aboundings of sin and wickedness, yet God left not himself without a witness in the hearts of men; but continued his Spirit in the ordinary operations thereof, secretly dealing with and entreating men to be reconciled to God. Notwithstanding their obstinate progress in sin, their continual pursuit of the lusts and desires of their

evil mind, they had many a gripe of conscience, many sad remorse, many checks and calls from the Holy Spirit, which, by their resolution to persist in sin, they did at length totally extinguish. Upon their rejection of the Spirit, God intends to ruin and reject them, and to that intent withdraws the Spirit, and the strivings of it. And presently after we read of the flood breaking in upon them, to their utter ruin and perdition.

The words will afford several observations; as first, from the method God took in this judgment, first withdrawing his Spirit, and then introducing the flood, we may observe,

1. D. That God's taking away his Spirit from any soul, is the certain forerunner of the ruin and destruction of that soul. This is clearly evinced from the words; for although the flood did immediately terminate in the destruction of the body only, yet because it snatched these men away in a state of impenitence, it was consequentially the destruction of the soul.

2. From that expression of the "Spirit's striving with man," which does always imply a resistance from the party with whom we strive, we may observe,

2. D. That there is in the heart of man a natural enmity and opposition to the motions of God's Holy Spirit; outward contention it is the proper issue and product of inward hatred: striving in action it is an undoubted sign of enmity in the heart. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." Gal. v. 17. Here we see there is a sharp combat between these two: and the apostle subjoins the reason of it; "for these two are contrary." Things contrary will vent their contrariety in mutual strife.

3. From the same expression of "striving" we may observe,

3. D. That the Spirit in its dealings with the heart is very earnest and vehement. To strive, it imports a vigorous putting forth of the power: it is such a posture as denotes an active desire. There is none that strives with another, but conquest it is the thing both in his desire and in his endeavour.

4. The fourth observation is drawn from the definite sentence that God here passes, that "his Spirit should not always strive with man," and it is this;

4. D. That there is a set and punctual time, after which the convincing operations of God's Spirit upon the heart of man, in order to his conversion, being resisted, will cease, and for ever leave him.

This seeming to take in the chief, if not the only drift and scope of the Spirit in these words, waiving the consideration of the rest, I shall now prosecute this. In the prosecution of it, I shall do these things.

I. I shall endeavour to prove and demonstrate the truth of this assertion from scripture.

II. I shall show how many ways the Spirit may be resisted.



III. I shall show whence and why it is that upon some resistance the Spirit finally withdraws.

IV. Make application.

I. Concerning the first, I shall present you with *the proof of this doctrine from several scriptures*, that give us pregnant examples, that this is the way of God's dealings still to withdraw his Spirit after some notorious resistance.

1. The first is that dreadful place in which is set down God's dispensation towards the children of Israel, in Psalm xcv. 10: "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their hearts, and have not known my ways; unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest." We have here these things observable.

(1.) Their resistance of God's Spirit, specified in these words; "I was grieved with this generation."

(2.) We have the set and limited time of that resistance, it was "forty years."

(3.) God's judicial withdrawing his Spirit thereupon, and delivering them up to a state of everlasting spiritual desertion, held forth in these words, "I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest." From whence we see that the departure of the Spirit was as infallibly sure, as the truth of God confirmed with the obligation of an oath could make it.

2. A second place, that yet further proves that there is such a critical fixed time of the Spirit's working, is in Heb. iv. 7, "He limiteth a certain day, saying, To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart." This expression seems to hold forth two things.

(1.) The fixed determination of the time of the Spirit's speaking to us; "To-day." Now as in a day, after such a set hour it is unavoidably and certainly night: so after such a season of the Spirit's strivings, there inevitably follows a final desertion. While it is day the Spirit works; but this night cometh, and it will not work.

(2.) This expression shows the shortness of this time. The day of grace, it is but a day. It is the sun of righteousness shining in our faces for some few hours. Which, by the way, speaks severe reproof to the unreasonable delays of some, in their closing and complying with God. The Spirit calls them to-day, and they promise obedience to-morrow. Procrastination in temporals is always dangerous, but in spirituals it is often damnable.

3. The third place that may be alleged for the proof of this truth is that, Luke xix. 42, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thy eyes." In these words also we may observe three things.

(1.) Their enjoyment of a season, in which the Spirit dealt with them concerning the things of their peace; they had their day.

(2.) Their neglect and misimprovement of that season, implied in Christ's wish that they had known and improved it.

(3.) God's dealing with them upon that misimprovement; the things of their peace were hid from their eyes. When the day of grace is past, and darkness upon the soul, no wonder if it is unable to discern the things of its peace. To these places we may add that in Gen. xv. 16, where God says, "that the sin of the Amorites was not yet full:" implying, that there was a certain pitch of sin, under which he would not destroy, and after which he would not spare them. Till such time as a vessel is filled, we may still pour in more and more; but when it comes to its fulness, then it has its *ne plus ultra*, there is no capacity to receive any more. So during the time of God's permission, we may go on in a way of opposition to him, to multiply acts of resistance against the Spirit; but after this set time is expired, there must be no further resistance made: we must either yield, or die eternally: God will not let us perpetuate our rebellions against him; he will either take away our opposition, or the Spirit which we so oppose.

And thus much for the proof of the point by scriptures, which leave it undoubted, that the Spirit has its set time of striving with the heart, after which it will cease. And now I could observe also, by way of allusion and illustration, how that the creatures also have their set and stinted times allotted them, beyond which they can do nothing with success. It is notable in the dealings of men, when they make contracts and bargains, there is some good hour, some advantageous nick of time, which if overslipped and let go, either the price fails or the thing fails. And it is further observable, that there are some lucky seasons and offers of preferment in every man's life, which if not laid hold upon, a man is for ever after degraded in his worldly advancements. Nay, even those creatures that are only acted by a principle of sense do observe their set times, in which they will do the works of their nature, and after which they will not. The bird has its summer to build in, and the bee to gather honey in; and if they should chance to be hindered from doing these works at that time, they are never seen to do them in the winter. In Jeremiah viii. 7, we have this very consideration applied to this present purpose, "Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming, but my people know not the judgment of the Lord." I do not mention these things as arguments to prove any thing, but only as observations to illustrate what has been already proved. For since some presume to say, that the visible carnal world is an image or adumbration of the invisible and spiritual; methinks God, that has tied all the operations of the creature within such a strict observance of their respective seasons, he himself should be much more regular

and exact in the observance of his own. I shall conclude this first head with that place in Eccles. iii. 1, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven." And without question we shall find, that not man only, but even the Spirit of God also, as he has his time to work, so he has a time also to leave off working; a time to solicit and persuade, and a time to depart.

But here, before I enter upon the second thing, to prevent misapprehensions, you must here observe, when I say there is a set time of the Spirit's working, after which it ceases, it is not to be understood of a general set time, which is the same in every man, and beyond which these workings never pass: as for example, because forty years was the set time of the Spirit's striving with Israel, we are not thence to conclude, that it will continue its workings just so long with all the world besides: but it is to be meant of a set and stinted time in respect of every particular man's life, in which there is some limited period, wherein the workings of the Spirit will for ever stop. For as it merely depends upon the sovereignty of God's good pleasure, whether or no there should be any such workings at all; so it is likewise absolutely at his disposal to prolong or shorten their continuance. Only this we may rationally collect; where the means of grace are more plentiful, there the Spirit, upon resistance, sooner departs. Now these being more fully, clearly, and convincingly dealt forth under the dispensations of the gospel, than those of the law, we may conclude this also, that the Spirit in such times is quicker in his despatches, and shorter in his stay. Thus God forbore the fig-tree but three years, and the children of Israel forty. And no wonder: that was in a fruitful soil, these in the wilderness. And God will bear with that unfruitfulness in a wilderness, that he will not in his vineyard.

II. Having thus proved the point by scripture, and withal given you some caution for the understanding of it; I proceed in the next place to show, *how the Spirit may be resisted in its workings upon the heart*. Herein as for those controversies, whether the workings of the Spirit, by which a man is not actually converted, were yet notwithstanding sufficient for his conversion; or, when one resists the Spirit, and another does not, whether this proceeds from the different operations of the Spirit, or the different dispositions of the hearts wrought upon; I shall not undertake here to determine. But this I shall presume to affirm, that what God never intended should convert a man, was never able to convert him: and moreover, what never actually does convert him, was never fully intended for his conversion: otherwise, if it was, we must make his intentions frustrate; which, I think, cannot be affirmed, without a blasphemous derogation from his power and his wisdom. But to the point in

hand, namely, to show how many ways the Spirit may be resisted. Where we must first lay down, what it is in general to resist the Spirit. And this I conceive is, in brief, to disobey the Spirit commanding and persuading the soul to the performance of duty, and the avoidance of sin.

Now the Spirit commands and persuades two ways.

1. Externally, by the letter of the word, either written or preached.

2. By its immediate internal workings upon the soul, which I shall reduce to two: (1.) The illumination of the understanding. (2.) The conviction of the will.

Now suitable to all these ways of the Spirit's dealing with us, there are so many different acts of resistance, by which these dealings are opposed. Of all which in their order.

1. Concerning the resistance of the Spirit in disobeying the letter of the word. The reason that disobedience to the word is to be accounted an opposing of the Spirit, is because the word was dictated and inspired by the Spirit itself. As we have it in 2 Pet. i. ult., "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Spirit." Therefore to disobey what was written and delivered by them, was, in effect, to disobey the Spirit that did inspire them. I may truly say of this word, that it is the voice of God, and not of a man: and what God is the author of, that he will certainly own, both by his encouragements of those that obey it, and his judgments upon those that reject it. It may indeed be delivered by a poor, inconsiderable, obscure man, but even so it is stamped with the appointment of God, and will do thorough execution: be the cloud never so obscure and dark, yet lightning may break from it, to the terror and shaking of all beholders. This word, that is so slighted by sinful man, is no less than the power of the almighty God to salvation; that instrument which the divine omnipotence uses to convert souls. Look but into the law; and if thou hast a spiritual ear open to hear it, it will speak with a voice that will make thee tremble. Read the gospel; and if ever God do thee good by it, thou wilt feel it like a two-edged sword, dividing between thee and thy dearest lusts. It will be a fiery, a searching word: it will pierce into thy very heart, and unbosom all thy retired corruptions: it will discover to thee those two great mysteries, the mystery of godliness and of iniquity: it will mightily convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment: it will display how cursed and bitter a thing it is to sin against an almighty God: how excellent and amiable it is to follow him in the traces of a pure conversation. It will also lay before thee the certainty, the horror, and dreadfulfulness of the day of judgment to all the impenitent. This is the power, this is the energy and the force of the word; and if it never had this effect upon

thy heart, it was because thou hast resisted the Spirit speaking in it.

It may here be demanded how the Spirit may be resisted speaking in the word. I answer, two ways: 1. By a negligent hearing and a careless attendance upon it. 2. By acting in a clear and open contrariety to it.

(1.) Concerning the first, the resistance of the Spirit speaking in the word by a superficial attendance upon it. As for those that seldom or never hear it all; that keep out of the Spirit's reach; that are such fools as not only to put the "evil day," but also the good day, "far from them;" that do not so much resist, as wholly reject the Spirit; their condition, no doubt, is very sad and desperate. Certainly Sodom and Gomorrah will be able to commence a plea for themselves at the day of judgment that these cannot: for the joyful sound never rung in their ears, the gospel was never brought to their doors; but these have had the means even offered to them, and refused them. But if the word has been a burden, and sabbaths have been a trouble, what a weight will there be in damnation! A man shall one day be accountable not only for the sermons that he has heard, but for those also that he might have heard. But to pass over those who scarce merit the name of professors, there is another sort that indeed hear the word, yet with that supine negligence, that they cannot quit themselves from being ranked amongst the contemners of the Spirit. Some indeed hear the sound of the word as of the wind, but for want of attention, scarce know from whence it comes, nor whither it goes. Some suffer wandering thoughts, like the fowls of the air, to intercept the seed, before it falls upon their hearts. Some by reason of their own idle discourses cannot hear the voice of the Spirit. Some sleep and shut their eyes against that light that might otherwise shine into their souls. And is not this to despise the Spirit? Believe it, as it is the greatest affront that we can offer to any considering man, when he is seriously speaking to us, and that about the things of our own concernment, to be thinking of something else, and not to regard him; so in these addresses of the Spirit to us about the things of our own eternal peace, not to attend or observe him, is so much greater a contempt, by how much the Spirit of God is greater than the greatest of men.

(2.) The second way of resisting the Spirit speaking in the word, is by acting contrary to that word. The most considerable thing in man is his actions. Every action it is defined, *flurx virium agentis*; it is the drawing forth the very spirit and vigour of the agent upon some object: thoughts like shadows in the mind quickly vanish; words are transient and pass away, but deeds and actions will abide. Accordingly God lays all the stress of religion upon these; the law runs thus, "Do this, and thou shalt live:" the gospel says, "Not every one that cries, Lord, Lord,

but he that does the will of my Father, shall enter into heaven." Both agree in this, that they put not men upon bare words and wishes, but upon doing. Nay, let me further say, if it were possible that we could do the will of God without hearing of it, it was no matter whether we heard it or no; for hearing is not intended for itself, but in order to doing. We read of one in the gospel that was commanded by his father to go work in the vineyard, but he denied, and said he would not go; yet notwithstanding was excused, because at length he did go: and so expiated the evil of his words, by the goodness of his deeds. Therefore it is the obedience or disobedience of our actions that the Spirit of God chiefly regards. You may hear the word, and what is more, you may hear it with attention, yet if by your practice you contradict the things that you have heard, this is to resist the Spirit. To hear or read the precepts of God, and yet do things contrary to those precepts; to hear the thunder of his curses, and yet not to be wrought upon, so as to avoid the cursed thing, this is notoriously to resist the Spirit. He that shall hear God commanding him not to take his name in vain, and yet pollute it with hideous, blasphemous oaths; that shall hear Christ forbidding wantonness, even in the glance of an eye, and yet roll himself in folly and uncleanness; he that shall hear that dreadful voice of God, "Cursed be he that does the work of the Lord negligently," and yet come unprepared to duties, and, being come, slightly perform them; surely such a person is to be reckoned amongst the highest opposers of the Spirit. If every idle word renders a man obnoxious to judgment, shall not a downright breach of the law by action sink a man under a much more heavy condemnation? He that will not hear, or hearing takes no notice of the laws of his prince, is a disobedient subject: but he that acts in opposition to them is an open rebel. Now the reasons that this kind of resisting the Spirit in our actions is so great, may be these two.

1st. Because action is the very perfection and consummation of sin. Sin may indeed make a foul progress in our thoughts and desires, and step a little further in our words; but when it comes to be acted, then it attains its full pitch, and becomes perfect.

2dly. Because sin in the actions argues an overflowing and a redundancy of sin in the heart. A sinful action it is only the boiling over of sin as it lies there: for the heart it is yet in the womb; for as the apostle says, there it is conceived: but in the actual commission of it, it is then brought forth: so that if (according to our Saviour's word) through the abundance of the heart a man speaks, then certainly from the exceeding superabundance of it does he proceed to action.

Having thus shown how the Spirit is resisted in its external speaking in the word,

2. I shall next show how it is resisted in its immediate internal workings upon the soul. Here we must reflect upon ourselves, and know that upon the unhappy fall of man, sin, and the wretched effects of sin, immediately entered upon, and took full possession of all his faculties: his understanding, that before shined clear like the lamp of God, was by sin overspread with darkness; his will, that bore a perfect conformity to the divine will, was rendered totally averse from, and contrary to the things of God. When man was first created, there was such an exact symmetry and harmony of all the faculties, such an absolute composure of the whole, that he was not only the workmanship, but also the image of his Maker. But sin shattered all, it took the whole fabric asunder. And thus the soul being broken and ruined (as God threatened to Babylon, in Isaiah xiii. 21), became desolate, and a place of "doleful creatures;" that is black and dismal apprehensions of God's wrath, and gross ignorance of his will, lodging in the understanding: and a place for satyrs to dance in; that is, of brutish lusts and impure desires, acting, moving, and taking their pastime in the will. Now God the Father, through the admirable contrivance of his wisdom, and the propensity of his mercy, intending man's recovery, and the Son as Mediator undertaking it, it was requisite that in order to it, he should take away and cure all these distempers both of man's understanding and his will. Hereupon, by virtue of the power committed to him as Mediator, he issues forth the Spirit as the purchase of his death, for the accomplishment of these gracious ends in renewing and recruiting the decayed nature of man. And this he does by the two forementioned works, to wit, illumination and conviction; in both of which the Spirit may be resisted.

(1.) Concerning our resistance of it in illumination, or its enlightening work. Where note by way of caution, that by the works of the Spirit I understand not the extraordinary, efficacious works thereof in true conversion; for these are not resistible, inasmuch as they take away our resistance: they depend not upon the courtesy of our wills as to their success, but upon the sole power of God forcing his way through the heart in spite of all opposition. But I speak of its common works, such as a man may frustrate, such as he may be partaker of and yet perish. And these enlightenings both may be and often are resisted by the soul. Illumination in general may be described, the Spirit's infusing a certain light into the mind, whereby it is in some measure enabled to discern and judge of the things of God. Now this light is threefold.

1st That universal light which we usually term the light of nature, yet so as it may also be rightly termed the light of the Spirit; but in a different respect. It is called the light of nature, because of its general inherence in all men; because it is com-

mensurate and of equal extent with nature, so that wheresoever the nature of man is to be found, there this light is to be found. "It enlightens every man that comes into the world." But on the other hand, it is called the light of the Spirit, in respect of the Spirit's efficiency, in that it is the producing cause of it, as it is of every good and perfect gift. This light it is the first breathing of God upon our nature, the very first draught and lineaments of the new creature; it is, as it were, the first dawning of the Spirit upon the soul, in those connate principles born with us into the world, and discovering, though very imperfectly, some general truths: as that there is a God, and that this God is to be worshipped, and the like. Yet this is but a glimmering, imperfect light, and such a one as carries with it a greater mixture of darkness; like the break of day, which has in it more of darkness, it is but one remove from darkness. The Spirit of God shining barely in nature, it is like the sun shining through a cloud, but with a faint, weak brightness, made rather to refresh than satisfy. Yet this was all the heathens had, in whom especially the imperfection of it appeared, as not being able to rescue them from idolatry, from villanous and unnatural lusts, both of which are the blush of nature as well as of religion. Yet by this light they shall be judged, and by this condemned. Wherefore of all sins that resist the Spirit, loathe and detest those that resist it speaking in nature, which are so gross and horrid as not to be named, much less to be committed. Certainly these stains are not the stains and spots of God's children: nature itself is corrupted, yet it will testify aloud against such hideous corruptions.

Conscience is corrupted, yet like the unjust judge, through the importunity or cry of such it will judge righteously. To be unnatural is something more than to be irreligious; for a man to offer violence to the principles, what is it but a spiritual self-murder? To cease to be a man, is something worse than not to be a saint. O reverence therefore this light, set up by God himself in our nature. As we are not to rely upon it as our only guide, so are we upon no hand to sin against it: walking according to its directions is not sufficient to save us, but going contrary to them will certainly condemn us.

The second kind of light may be called a notional scripture light; that is, a bare knowledge of or assent to scripture truths. This light is begot in the mind of all professors by the mere hearing or reading the word; it is the bare perception of evangelical truths placed in the intellect, resting in the brain, treasured up there by a naked apprehension and speculation. So that the resisting this being almost the same with our resistance of the Spirit speaking in the word, only with this difference, that in the former we resist the word as considered in the letter, in this we resist it as it lies transcribed in the conceptions of the understanding. I say, since this almost coincides with the former, which I have discussed already, I shall proceed no further in it,



only leave this to your consideration, that if the poor heathens fell under the wrath and curse of God, only for resisting the Spirit in the dim light of nature; then how will it be possible for us to escape if we resist it now shining openly, like the sun in his might, in the clear discovery of the law and gospel? As the light which we resist is greater or less, so is the proportion of our sin either diminished or advanced. Therefore if we disobey the Spirit, what can follow but that as our light, so our sin also, must be far greater than theirs, and our punishment answerable? For assuredly, the just God who takes the exact and true dimensions of sin, will heat the furnace of his wrath seven times hotter for gospel reprobates, than for ignorant heathens.

The third kind of light may be called a special convincing light, which is a higher degree of the enlightening work of the Spirit, and not common to all professors, yet such a one as may be resisted, yea and totally extinguished. This is the highest attainment of the soul on this side saving grace; it is like the clear shining of the moon and stars, which is the greatest light that is consistent with a state of darkness. Yea, it is such a light as does not only make a discovery of the things of God, but also engenders in the soul a certain relish and taste of them. It is a light, not only of knowledge, but of joy; and this it was that enlightened the stony ground in Matt. xiii. 20, which did not only hear and apprehend the word, but also with joy received it: yet we see in the next verse, that it was not able to withstand tribulations and persecutions, but when the storms arose and the wind beat upon it, it quickly went out; like a torch before a tempest, after a very short and weak contest, it was soon extinguished. However, we must know, that this light is the *ultimus conatus*, the last and greatest endeavour of the Spirit upon a reprobate soul, which, once finally resisted, for ever departs, and leaves the soul under an everlasting night, without any after-returns of day. To be thus enlightened, is called in scripture to "taste of the heavenly gift, to be partaker of the Holy Ghost, and of the powers of the world to come," as it is expressed in Heb. vi. 4, 5: and of the desperate, deplorable condition of those that miscarry under these illuminations, we have an account in the next verse; "If they fall away it is impossible to renew them again to repentance." "The wicked," says God, "shall fall and never rise."

He that shall hear what report the gospel makes of the nature of sin, and be so far affected with a lively sense and feeling of it, as to resolve against it, to hate it, even to a relinquishment of it, and continue for a long time so to do, yet notwithstanding at length disentangle himself from those thoughts and apprehensions of sin, so far as to relapse into the fearful commission and love of it, that man's case is grievous, and his wound not easily curable. For God intends these illuminations as singular special

means, both to allure the soul to duty by the discovery of the love of Christ, and to awe it from sin by the terrors of hell. Now when a man desires to sleep securely in the free enjoyment of his sin, and shall therefore seek to put out this light, we have no ground to conclude that the Spirit will ever restore it. 'He that frowardly and foolishly puts out his candle, is not sure to blow it in again. As for those common shinings of it that beam forth in the notion of the word, they indeed may be renewed every sermon, they are such beams as we read of, *occidere et redire possunt*. But when this special light is extinct, when this sets in darkness, the soul that is thus benighted is left to sleep a perpetual sleep of sin and death.

And thus much concerning the first inward work of the Spirit, to wit, illumination of the understanding.

(2.) We come now to the second, which is the conviction of the will, which conviction may be described in general,

A work of the Spirit of God upon the will and affections, producing in them some imperfect liking of the ways of God, and dislike to the ways of sin.

There is a clear and open passage between the understanding and the will. Light in the one naturally begets heat in the other, and the conviction of the affections is never greater than the illumination of the judgment. So that when the work of the Spirit miscarries about the understanding, it never thoroughly succeeds in the will; for it strikes the will and the affections through the understanding, and if it cannot pierce this, it is not to be imagined how the blow can reach the other.

Now the convincing works of the Spirit upon the will may be reduced to these three. 1. A begetting in it some good desires, wishes, and inclinations. 2. An enabling it to perform some imperfect obedience. 3. An enabling it to leave some sins. In all these works the Spirit may be resisted and opposed.

1st. And first, it may be resisted in the good desires and inclinations that it suggests to the will. That these good desires issue from the Spirit, I suppose none will deny, who acknowledges that of ourselves we are not so much as able to think a good thought. He that affirms holy duties may proceed from an unholy, corrupt heart, may as well expect "grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles." As there are some desires so exceeding black and hellish, that it easily appears they came into the mind from their father the devil: so on the contrary there are some so pure and holy, that they may be quickly discerned to be the offspring of the Spirit, as bearing his image and likeness. Good inclinations, they are the firstborn of holiness in the soul, the very first endeavours and throes of the new birth. And as they are the first, so in reason they may be thought to be most imperfect, and consequently most easy to be rejected: a good desire stepping forth amongst raging and unmortified lusts, it is like

righteous but weak Lot, endeavouring to appease the tumult of the Sodomites. O how easily is it forced to retire! how quickly is it repulsed! It is like a drop of water falling into a furnace, that presently exhales and does not at all allay the fury of its heat. How often has the Spirit whispered to us, "This is the way, walk in it," and our perverse hearts have hurried us another way! How often has many a soul thoughts of relinquishing its sin and returning to God, and yet by the allurements of new pleasures, has been inveigled and recalled back! How often do some think of repairing to Christ, and yet are held fast by the fetters of prevailing lust? And all this befalls men, because they improve not these blessed inclinations. Oh! were we but true to our own souls, to cherish these tender, new-born, infant desires, and to carry them to Christ by prayer, certainly he would take them in his arms and bless them, and send them away strengthened. Every sincere desire to pray might be improved to a blessed communion with God, every secret dislike of impurity might be wrought up to sanctity of life and conversation. O despise not therefore "the day of small things;" shut not your ears against the secret admonitions of the Spirit, they are none other than God himself speaking to thee (as to Elijah) in "a still voice." You may one day come to know, when with bitterness of soul you shall reflect upon and recollect all these dealings of the Spirit: Such a time I had an inclination to confess my idleness, my intemperance before God, and amend it, but I hearkened to the dissuasions of my corrupt heart, and so neglected it. Such a time I had strong motions and intentions to restore my ill-gotten goods, but my covetousness restrained me. I say, then you will know and confess (as Jacob did of Bethel) "of a truth God was in all these workings, and I knew it not."

2dly. The Spirit may be opposed, as it enables the soul to perform some imperfect obedience to God's commands. A man, by the convincing energy of the Spirit in the word, may be led, or rather drawn to many duties. Thus Herod, in Mark vi. 20, upon the soul-searching ministry of John, is said to have "done many things." The Israelites also, in Psalm lxxviii. 34, were driven by God's judgments to proceed very far in his worship; "When he slew them," it is said, "they sought him, and they returned and inquired early after God." So that here we have both duty and earnestness in duty; but we see in the following verse they quickly got loose from those convictions; "They flattered him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their lips:" that is, their ensuing practices foully falsified all those fair promises of obedience, which they made under their convictions. Such men's hearts may be often heated by the lively and warm impressions of the Spirit, yet by their innate corruptions, as it were, their proper form, like water heated, they are quickly recovered to their native coldness. In Job xxvii. 10, Job says,

"Will the hypocrite always call upon God?" Implying, I conceive, that from the motions of God's Spirit he ~~may~~ engage very fairly in that duty, though he fall short of continuance. See the convincing works of God's Spirit upon Ephraim, in Hosea vi. 4; they wrought in him some superficial beginnings of goodness, but as it is there expressed, "it was like a morning cloud," when temptations arose it posted away, and like the early dew, presently drunk up by the scorching heat of raging lusts. Now this resistance of the Spirit is much more heinous than the former, inasmuch as the practice of holiness is greater than a bare desire and inclination to it. To injure or offend him that does but wish and desire our good, argues little ingenuity; but to grieve and oppose him that actually endeavours it, shows a plain want of humanity. For him who has maintained some communion with the Spirit, and has "taken sweet counsel with him," so that they have often "walked to the house of God in company;" I say, for such a one to lift up his heel in acts of defiance and resistance of the Spirit, this is very grievous. When a man has proceeded very far in the mortification of his pride, his drunkenness, his lust, for him to return again to the same excess of riot, this is a more than ordinary provocation. When he is upon a fair advance to Zoar, to the city of life and deliverance, for such a one to look back upon Sodom, and cast an eye of desire upon his forsaken filth; it is just with God to make such a one a wonder and a sad example of his abused mercy. But this is the upshot of all, this is the very dividing point where the Spirit of God and the souls of men break and part for ever; they find a cursed pleasure in sin, and none in a course of duty: and so, maugre all the entreaties and wooing convictions of the Spirit, they relinquish duty and return to sin.

3dly. The Spirit may be opposed in that convincing work, whereby it enables the will to forsake some sins. This work bears some affinity with the former, but it is not altogether the same. I confess, to yield perfect obedience to all God's commands, does include in it a forsaking of all sin, and is consequentially, yea and really, the same with it. But imperfectly to execute some good duties, and imperfectly to leave some sins, which is here intended, are two distinct things. Now that the Spirit is able to work up a soul even to this also, and that the soul is likewise able to frustrate this work, these following scriptures will demonstrate. 2 Peter ii. 20, we have some that, by the convincing help of the Spirit, "had escaped the pollutions of the world," they had washed their hands of all those enormities that raged and reigned in the lives of grosser sinners. Yet in the same verse we have these also "again entangled and overcome by their lusts;" and thereupon compared to the most filthy creatures, which being washed, with much greediness return to their beloved mire and defilements. In Gal. iii. 3, we

find some who had "begun in the Spirit," yet in danger to have "ended in the flesh;" so treacherous is sin in its departure, and so violent in its returns. Certainly in these cases it seems to retire and draw back, only to come on afterwards with a greater assault. For the appetite of sin being only restrained, not taken away, it returns after a while with more violent fury upon its object: and like a thirsty man, the longer it has forbore to drink of the pleasures of sin, it takes so much deeper a draught of them at length. Thus sin is only pent up in the soul by main force of the Spirit, but when it finds the least vent it lashes out to the purpose: some cannot neglect duties as they used to do, because the terrors of God are upon their souls; some dare not venture upon their former lewd courses, because the Spirit meets them with the drawn sword of God's vengeance, casting the very flashes of hell in their faces, if they step a foot into those ways. So that here the sinner is indeed held in bonds, but his sinful nature is still unchanged; like the devils themselves, who, though they are kept in chains, yet they are still devils in chains. The soul has lost the present exercise of sin, yet still retains the faculty: but at length the Spirit having for a long time kept the soul from its lust, as God did Balaam from his covetousness, and still hearing it crying and craving after its beloved corruption; even as God let Balaam go upon the like importunity, so the Spirit slacks his hold and lets the soul loose to its sin. And then it sins at a high rate indeed; better were it for man never to have given the Spirit any room, any place in his heart, than at length thus to turn it out. We may truly say of this holy guest, *Turpius ejicitur, quam non admittitur*; yea, safer had it been for such a soul to have still wallowed in his sin, than being once rescued from it, again to apostatize to it. For this is to sin from choice, and that from choice grounded upon experience; for having tried both ways, to wit, those of the Spirit, and those of sin, by such returns to it he does aloud proclaim his judgment to the world that sin is better.

And thus much concerning the second general head, to show how many ways the Spirit may be resisted.

III. I proceed to the third, *to show the reasons why upon such resistance the Spirit finally withdraws.*

1. The first reason is drawn from God's decree. This is that which bounds all things, and fixes the freest operations of second causes: the event of things in themselves merely contingent, by this decree is stamped certain and infallible. It turns a casualty into a certainty; a contingency into a necessity. And as the actions of the creature are limited and determined by this decree, so the most free actions of God himself come also within the restraining compass of the same. God purposes before he acts, and his purpose it is the measure of his operations: and what

God wills, he wills immutably. His wisdom and infinite knowledge foresees and debates all inconveniences antecedently to every act of volition; and so there can be no new emergent inconvenience that may unframe his resolutions and cause a change. Accordingly the workings and strivings of God's Spirit are measured out and bounded by this decree; by virtue of which its departure is firmly and irreversibly intended, and some resistance of it is thereby put beyond pardon. Some think the like of the great sin against the Holy Ghost, that is not unpardonable from its own nature, but from God's special decree; not because it is of so great malignity as to surpass the extent of God's mercies, nor yet because it is inconsistent with the means of obtaining pardon, but that God by an act of sovereignty singled out this sin, and for the glory of his justice and the terror of those that should abuse his grace, passed a decree for ever to exclude it from all possibility of remission. But thus much by way of digression. Now this decree has not any active influence or efficiency, so as actually to produce or put in being the thing decreed. I say the decree itself does not effect the thing, but it engages God's veracity and immutable truth, to see it certainly effected. There is nothing therefore but, if we pursue it to its first original, must of necessity terminate in this decree, as deriving from hence the first rise and reason of its being. I say the reason, though not the cause. In Eph. i. 11, God is said to "work all things according to the counsel of his own will." He resembles an excellent artificer, who in all his works of art has forelaid in his mind a perfect model of his intended fabric, before ever he sets the first hand to it. It is finished in the contrivance, before it is so much as begun in the production. God says, "Shall I decree, and shall it not come to pass?" So by inversion we may say, Shall any thing come to pass, and shall not he decree? Would we know why the Spirit of God departed from Judas, even to the loss and perdition of his soul? We have an account in John xvii. 12; it was "that the scriptures might be fulfilled;" that is, that the will or decree of God delivered in scripture concerning Judas might be accomplished.

Now what terrors should this strike into all resisters of the Spirit, all prodigals of the means of grace! Whosoever spends upon mercy, spends upon a set allowance. God has allotted and decreed to every man his portion in the Spirit's workings, which by reason of the enforcing power of that decree, he will never extend nor contract, diminish nor augment. And since it is not known to us in what point of our life God has set this fatal bound, as it is a sovereign remedy to prevent despair, that none might unadvisedly conclude against himself, that he had finally resisted the Spirit: so on the other hand it ought to be a strong argument to cut short the outrageous progress of a presuming sinner, since he knows not but the very next sin he is closing

with, may separate between him and the Spirit of God for ever. For shall God limit the natural days of our life, beyond which we cannot pass, as it is in Job xiv. 5, and shall the days of the Spirit's striving with us be undetermined? Certainly what he says of those may be said of the Spirit's workings, "they are all numbered." And that they are so will appear one day, when those exact bills of our accounts, relating all our opposings even of the smallest motions of the Spirit, shall be preferred and read against us. Can we then (as it is expressed in the prophet) disannul "God's covenant with day and night?" Can we disappoint or change "the ordinances of heaven and earth?" Then may we stretch the fixed term of the Spirit's dealing with our hearts beyond God's decree. Then may we, when our day of grace is expiring, cause the sun of mercy to go ten degrees backward. Alas! poor inconsiderable, impotent men! We must lay our mouths in the dust, and give way to the irresistible decree of God for ever. Can all the men in the world, by the united force of their power and policy, hinder the sun from setting but for the space of one hour? nay, but of one moment? And can we, weak, sinful worms, prolong our precious day of grace at our pleasure? True it is, the mercy of God is infinite, and his goodness past finding out; but he that has set bars and doors to the sea, has also set bounds to this ocean of his mercy, and said, Thus far shall you come in your strivings with such a soul, and no further.

2. The second reason why the Spirit departs upon resistance, is because it is most agreeable to the great intent and design of the gospel. And this is twofold, suitable to which the Spirit does accordingly appropriate a twofold operation.

(1.) The first great gospel design is the converting and saving the elect, and this is accomplished by an effectual converting power, which in its addresses to the soul is invincible. It does not persuade but overpower, and therefore never fails or miscarries, but effectually converts, sanctifies, and reduces the soul. The infallible success of the work depends upon the irresistible force of the agent: by a happy, alluring, yet efficacious violence it draws; Jer. xxxi. 3, "With lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Wheresoever this power draws, the soul certainly follows: I rather say certainly than necessarily, because necessity may seem to entrench upon the free spontaneity of the will, although it is clear that there is a kind of necessity which is compatible with its freedom. The drawing work of the Spirit it has the strength but not the violence of coaction, Luke xiv. 23, "Compel them to come in." There is a compulsion indeed, but not such a one as is against the will; but such a one as makes it willing. And this alone is sufficient to enervate the objections of those free-willers, that exclaim of coaction and compulsion in an irresistible converting work. Thus therefore the Spirit effects God's great and primary gospel design, in calling home his sheep, his

chosen ones, the objects of his eternal love: and this is done by an effectual, never-failing power in their vocation; by which they are fully instated in their present possession of grace, and sufficiently secured in their hopes of glory for the future.

(2.) The second end and design of the gospel is to render reprobates inexcusable; and this is no less effectually done by the common enlightening, convincing works of the Spirit, which are sufficient to take off all pleas, to silence them in their own defence, and to enhance their guilt beyond excuse. It is confessed, the converting, renewing work of the Spirit was never vouchsafed to any reprobate; they were never admitted to share in the children's bread. Yet God's denial of recovering grace cannot warrant them in a state of sin. All indeed through Adam were generally immersed into an equal plunge of misery, all were forlorn and broke, and as to the stock of their first righteousness totally bankrupt, and the law still remains a rigid exactor of obedience. The elect and reprobate both fell from their righteousness, but God was pleased to renew the store of the former, leaving the latter destitute: but may not God even from these require perfect obedience, though they have lost the power to perform it? A creditor does not lose his right to his money, because the debtor is unable to pay. Suppose a creditor have two debtors, and both turn bankrupt; now if he of his own free cost and favour supplies one wherewithal to discharge the debt, may he not therefore demand it of the other without the like supply? Certainly mercy to one does not weaken or take off the procedure of the law against the other; neither our merits nor our misery can lay any obligation upon God's grace. He that shall dare to cavil and expostulate with his Maker at such a rate of impiety and impudence, as the corrupt heart of man is apt to do, "Is it my fault that I remain unconverted under all my convictions? Had God vouchsafed to me converting grace as he did to others, I had been converted as well as they?" God will answer the expostulations of such men, as he did those, Matt. xx. 13, 15, "Friend, I do thee no wrong." Is it not lawful to do with my own free grace as I please? "Is thine eye evil and malicious, because I am good?" Out of my mercy I bestowed converting grace upon such an unworthy sinner, out of my sovereignty I denied it to another, yet still without any impeachment to my justice. His justice is not at all injured when he confers grace upon one, nor his mercy lessened when he withholds it from another. However a man may for a while please himself in such objections against his Creator, and seem to himself to unreason the equity of God's proceedings; yet there will be a time when the sinner shall stand clearly convinced of the righteousness of God's dealings in his final departure from him; so as not to be able to plead or reply any thing against him in a rational way to all eternity: and this of all other will be the



most stinging consideration, the most irksome and tormenting thought: for if we observe the vilest, the most prodigate malefactor, when he stands openly convict, and that by the most pregnant evidence, he is apt to relieve his mind with such poor, perishing, forlorn persuasions, as that he suffers unjustly, that he has hard measure, and that he smarts in the severe censures of men beyond the merit of his fact; then, I say, the slender comfort even of these apprehensions will fail the sinner. For he shall evidently find and know himself utterly forsaken, and rejected by the Spirit, and withal see it most just and righteous that he should be so forsaken. This is that that will most bitterly gnaw and rack the proud heart of a reprobate, when he shall be forced to acknowledge that the Spirit's departure is not only his punishment, but his desert: he shall then confess, that the Spirit was as real in his workings, as he was peremptory in his resistance: that he was as pathetic and tender in the offers of grace, as he was obstinate in their refusal: that the Spirit with much eagerness would have often stepped between him and the commission of his beloved sin, and that he with as much vehemence rushed into it. That the Spirit had used many forcible arguments to conclude him into duty, and that he still flew off; and when he could not answer them, absolutely denied them. All these things, in the dismal remembrance of them, will be like so many vultures devouring and preying upon a self-condemned soul.

But it may be here replied, What needs any continuance of the Spirit's workings to render a man inexcusable, since the very strivings of the Spirit in natural conscience is sufficient to effect this?

I answer, that it is most true, that even nature itself is able to cut off all excuse from the mind of an awakened sinner: as is clear from Rom. i. 20, where Paul, speaking of the heathen, which were only acted by this principle, says, that "they were without excuse." And again, in Rom. ii. 15, we read of their natural "consciences excusing and accusing each other," according as their deeds were good or evil. From whence it clearly follows, that the motions of God's Spirit are continued and vouchsafed to the impenitent under the Gospel, not barely to render them inexcusable, but to render them in a greater measure inexcusable, and to charge their impenitence with greater aggravations: for God intending to the reprobates different degrees of punishments, it is requisite, that in order to it, he should present their sins under different aggravations.

And thus we see God's two great gospel designs, the first of them to convert the elect, which is effected by the extraordinary power of the Spirit; the second to bereave the reprobate of excuse, which is accomplished by the ordinary strivings of it, in those convictions which in their issue prove ineffectual: so that

now the Spirit having finished the end for which those workings were continued, what in reason can follow, but, the end being acquired, those workings should cease? In human actions designed for the attainment of any end, when it is actually attained, the continuation of that action is irrational and absurd, And what is unsavoury and unbecoming in the actions of men, shall we ascribe to those of the Spirit? A man may with as much reason set his reapers to work, when he has finished his harvest; or set his labourers to prune and lop his trees, which by his own appointment they have already cut down; as the Spirit continue his strivings after he has fully accomplished God's end upon any sinner. He is sent only as God's agent or ambassador to do his message, and for a while to negotiate his business with the hearts of the impenitent, not to take up his fixed dwelling or habitation with them. Therefore it is most rational, that having done his message and finished his embassy he should depart.

3. The third ground or reason why God withdraws his Spirit upon our resistance, is because it highly tends to the vindication of his honour. Now God may vindicate his honour two ways in the Spirit's departure.

(1.) As it is a punishment to the sinner, that has dishonoured him. God's glory cannot be repaired but by the misery of the party that made a breach upon it. God cannot be glorious, till the offender is made miserable. Now this is a punishment exactly correspondent to the sin, that is totally spiritual. For can there be a greater punishment for a sinner, than to be permitted to take a full swing in the free satisfaction of his lust? When God bereaves his soul of his Spirit, there is, as I may say, a decree passed in the court of heaven, in respect of that soul, for liberty and toleration in sin. In this sense there is no distinction between the evil of sin and the evil of punishment; for the evil of sin is the greatest evil of punishment. If a man possessed with frenzy should endeavour to drown or stab himself, and being forcibly withheld, should fight and strive to have his will; could there be any greater punishment for his fighting and striving, than to be delivered over to the free execution of his intended mischief? We find the children of Israel grieving, and even fretting God's Spirit, in Ezek. xvi. 43, "Thou hast fretted me in all these things." Now what course does God take to revenge himself? Does he threaten them with the sword, with famine and desolation? Does he give them over as a prey to their enemies, to be insulted over by a bitter captivity? No; but, what is worse, that he may inflict spiritual judgments, he causes temporal judgments to cease; in verse 42, "I will make my fury towards thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry:" that is, his anger should grow to that height, that it should be too great to be outwardly expressed: it should burn inwardly; and so it is much

more dreadful. The wind when it breaks forth, it only shakes the trees: but when it is pent up, and restrained within the ground, it makes the very earth shake and tremble. Questionless there is not an expression in all God's word, that does more fully and terribly hold forth God's anger, than this wherein he says he will be angry no more. It is clear therefore that God cannot vindicate his honour by inflicting a greater evil upon those that despise his Spirit, than by withdrawing it. Then God punishes the unjust man in a fearful way, when he inflicts that matchless curse in Rev. xxii. 11, and says, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still." Then does he take the sorest vengeance of the unclean person, when he withdraws the pure motions of his Holy Spirit, and says, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." No penalty for sin so dreadful, as a liberty to continue in sin.

(2.) God may vindicate his honour by clearing his injured attributes from those aspersions that human mistakes might charge upon them: for upon God's merciful, patient continuance of his Spirit, after long opposition made against it, from the facility of God's forbearance, men are prone to conceive otherwise of God, than is either consistent with their duty or his honour. But now, by thus withdrawing of his Spirit, he does eminently vindicate and recover the repute of his injured attributes, and of these two especially: 1. Of his wisdom; 2. Of his mercy.

1st. He vindicates and asserts the honour of his wisdom. I confess it is downright atheism to deny God's wisdom in words, and few will do it. But corruption is apt to think what atheism only will avouch. And there is a language of the heart which speaks clear enough to God's dishonour, though not to our hearing. The voice of it in such a case is, "How doth God know, and is there knowledge in the Most High?" Psalm lxxiii. 11. Is it for God's wisdom to offer what he knows will be rejected; and to multiply his entreaties, that the sinner may only have occasion to multiply affronts? Is it prudence to urge and press a man with the continual offers of that thing, which we know him to be fully resolved for ever to refuse? Amongst men there is none but the covetous and the foolish that offer their gifts to those who they are sure will not accept them. He that shall give with the same importunity that others ask, and shall entreat men to receive his favours, plays the beggar in the midst of his liberality. Now as long as the Spirit prorogues his workings after an obstinate resistance of them, so long he only seeks and sues for a repulse; he courts an affront. It is mercy at first for God to send his Spirit, but when it is slighted it is wisdom to revoke it.

2dly. He vindicates the honour of his mercy. Such is the vileness of men, that even from mercy itself they take occasion to blaspheme mercy. For by thus presuming upon it, they do

not so much think or speak, as act their blasphemies against it. He that goes on to sin against mercy, he either thinks that God knows it not, and so cannot punish him; or that he is of so impregnable a clemency, that he will not. But as the former of these strikes at God's omniscience, so the latter at his mercy. For this is not properly mercy, but fondness; that is, an irrational mercy; which we cannot add to God's nature, but by such additions we should diminish and detract from his perfection.

Now God, by the departure of his Spirit, vindicates the honour of his mercy in a double respect.

First, by showing that it is noways inferior, much less contrary, to his holiness. God's attributes do not interfere nor clash: the exercise of one does not jostle out the other: they are at perfect agreement: and mercy will not enlarge itself to such a pitch as holiness will not warrant. God will let the resisters of his Spirit see, that as he was merciful to endure them so long, so he is too holy to bear with them any longer. For during the time of his forbearance, the repute of his holiness lies at stake. What glory did God gain to his mercy, as it is in Psalm l., by bearing with "such as consented with thieves, as were partakers with adulterers, as gave their mouth to slanders and reproaches?" I say, what glory did he gain in verse 21, "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence, and thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself?" Here we see, in recompence of his forbearance, they question his righteousness; and from his permission conclude also his approbation of their wickedness.

Secondly, God in this vindicates the honour of his mercy, by making it clear, that it is not repugnant to his justice: nay, that it is not only not repugnant to it, but also makes way for a severer execution of it: and from hence God may be said, not only to be merciful because he will be merciful, but because he will be just. Mercy neither can nor will rescue an impenitent sinner from the hand of justice. All the time that the infinite mercy of God is striving and dealing with the heart of an obstinate sinner, his justice is like a sleeping lion, ready to tear him in pieces whensoever God shall awaken it. It is reported of Dionysius, that setting to sea after he had pillaged a temple, and having a very prosperous voyage, he cried out, *O quam diis placet sacrilegium!* How are the gods pleased with sacrilege! The case of the obstinate sinner is not much unlike: when men in the full pursuit of their sins find themselves yet followed by the fresh gales of the Spirit blowing upon their hearts, they are apt to conclude, that God will still wait their leisure, that these motions will be perpetual, and that therefore they may take their own time to accept of those terms, that they suppose will be always offered: and consequently they will venture to swear once more, to wantonize once again, to take another sip or two

of the cup of intemperance, till the Spirit departs of a sudden, and leaves them in a state of irrecoverable hardness and perdition. As children when they play by the sea-shore, they will in sport step a little into the water, and presently a foot further, and so on, till the tide unexpectedly comes and sweeps them away beyond all possibility of return. As long as an obdurate sinner goes on resisting the Spirit, even the angels of heaven cry to God, "How long, O Lord, holy and just!" Where is the glory of thy holiness, and thy zeal for thy justice, that thou dost thus suffer so provoking and yet so contemptible a creature to make a progress in his rebellion, to abuse thy grace, and to affront thy Spirit? Now the righteous God is here even engaged to withdraw his Spirit, and to vindicate the honour of his mercy by the exercise of his justice.

4. God withdraws his Spirit upon resistance, because this naturally raises in the hearts of men an esteem and valuation of the Spirit's workings: and the reason of this is, because in so doing, men apparently see that God himself puts an esteem and value upon them, otherwise why should he so severely bereave men of them upon their abuse? Were it not a treasure, God would not be so choice of it. God showed what a value he put upon his vineyard, by taking it from those husbandmen who had misemployed it. The great God is not jealous for a trifle. God can continue worldly riches to men, even when they abuse them; but if a spiritual talent be misimproved, it must be taken away. Now upon whatsoever God shows his esteem, it is natural for men, acting rationally, to place theirs. Now the esteem that the departure of the Spirit begets upon their minds, is twofold.

(1.) An esteem of fear. For this, like the rest of God's judgments, is *pœna ad unum, terror ad omnes*; a punishment indeed to one, but a terror to all. God in every punishment does not intend revenge so much as example. We read how the Spirit departed from Saul; and certainly God designed it not only for a judgment upon him, but also for a document of fear to others; otherwise, why do these things stand upon eternal record in scripture? Questionless the thought of this would put a stop to any sober sinner; it would give a restriction to his appetite: and if there be any thing that keeps the sinner from causing the Spirit to depart, it is the fear of his departure. Men are usually ruled and instructed by their fears. It is the height of spiritual prudence, to draw caution from danger, to distil instruction from punishments; and from a serious consideration of the Spirit's final departure from others, to secure it in its abode with ourselves.

(2.) The thought of this begets in the minds of the godly an esteem of love. When they shall know that God withdraws his Spirit from the unworthy abusers of it, and yet continues it to themselves, notwithstanding all their unworthiness; if there be

any but the least grain of pious ingenuity in them, they cannot but reflect upon this distinguishing love of God with melting returns of love and affection. For who is there, even amongst the most holy of men, but reflecting upon his own heart, must of necessity confess, Is there not with me also an opposition to the Spirit as well as in others? Yet the Spirit has for ever departed from them, and still abides working and striving with me. Singularity puts a value and endearment upon mercy. Enjoyments that are peculiar are usually precious.

IV. *Application.* You have heard that there is a set time, after which the Spirit, being resisted, will cease to strive, and depart: you have also heard how many ways it may be resisted: and withal, the several grounds and reasons, why it will withdraw upon such resistance. And now, what can be more seasonable, than to wrap up all in the apostle's own exhortation, 1 Thess. v. 19, "Quench not the Spirit." It is clear therefore that it may be quenched. And if so, it will be our prudence to avoid all those courses, that may not only quench, but even cool it in its workings. Let every one be as careful and tender of grieving the Spirit, as he would be of grieving his only and his dearest friend. Believe it, it is this Spirit alone that is able to stand by and comfort you in all the disconsolate and dark passages of your lives. When he is gone, who shall resolve and clear up all the doubts of our misgiving and trembling consciences? who shall subdue all our corruptions? who shall bear up our desponding souls in the midst of afflictions? who shall ward off the force and fire of temptations? Our own deceiving hearts, an alluring world, a tempting devil, and all the powers of sin and hell will be let loose upon us: and, what is the greatest misery of all, being deprived of the Spirit, we shall have nothing to oppose them; no second to assist us. Be ready therefore to entertain it in all its motions; to cherish all its suggestions: whensoever it knocks at the door of your hearts (as it often does), stand prepared to open to it, and receive it with joy. When it speaks to you in the word, answer, as Samuel did, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears." When it seems to pull you from sin, and says, "Do not that abominable thing which my soul hates;" draw back your hands from the commission of it, and do it not for a world. When it enables you to relinquish and forsake some sins, never rest till you have forsaken them all. When it raises you to the performance of some good duties, still press forward to perfection: let every holy motion and desire be improved into a holy action: but if you should at any time chance to grieve or oppose him (as we do all of us too, too frequently); yet be sure that you persist not in it, but recover yourselves by a speedy and a serious humiliation. Mourn over your disobedience, pray fervently for an obedient heart. Assuredly you will hereafter

find, that it is better thus to strive with God in prayer, than with the Spirit in his workings. Now as arguments to dissuade or deter you from this, and withal to persuade and excite you to the former, take these motives.

1. Our resisting of the Spirit in his precepts and instructions will certainly bereave us of his comforts. Now the office of the Spirit consists in these two great works, to instruct and to comfort. The same Spirit that in John xvi. 7 is termed a *comforter*, in the 13th verse is said to be a guide to "lead into all truth." Where we must note, that his comforting work always presupposes and follows his work of instruction: yea, and it is dispensed to men as a reward for their obedience to that; nay, before this work pass upon the soul it is not capable of the other. For the Spirit to pour in comfort to an impure heart, before it is qualified and cleansed, and, as it were, prepared, by its instructing, convincing work; it is as if a physician should administer cordials to a corrupt, foul body: they would do much more hurt than good, till the ill humours are purged and evacuated. He that will not be reformed cannot be comforted. God has inseparably joined these two together, and therefore it is presumption for any to hope to divide and put them asunder; as it is in Rom. xiv. 17, "righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost" go linked together. Purity and spiritual joy are as closely united as sin and sorrow. It is vain to catch at one and balk the other. He that will not obey the Spirit as his instructor shall never enjoy him as his comforter.

Now the reason that such as resist the Spirit cannot enjoy his comforts is, because this resistance is inconsistent with those ways by which the Spirit speaks comfort; and these are two.

(1.) The Spirit speaks comfortably, by giving a man to understand his interest in Christ, and consequently in the love of God. But it is impossible for him that resists the Spirit to be sure of any of these, inasmuch as he falls under those qualifications that render a man the proper object of God's hatred, and totally estranged from Christ; 1 John iii. 6, "Whosoever abideth in Christ, sinneth not: and whosoever sinneth hath neither seen nor known him." I suppose it will be easily granted, that he who acts in a continual repugnancy to God's Spirit, by a despisal of all his holy motions and suggestions, sins, and that at a very high strain; and upon this concession, this scripture will unavoidably conclude him so far unacquainted with Christ, as neither to have seen nor known him. And can we rationally imagine, that he who has neither seen nor known Christ, can have any sure interest in him? He that is interested in Christ is his friend; John xv. 15, "I call you not servants, but friends." But he that is not so much as an acquaintance, cannot possibly be a friend. And for any interest in God's love, he is totally excluded from that, Psalm xi. 5, "The wicked his soul hateth." And such are

all resisters of God's Spirit, wicked in the highest, κατ' ἐξοχήν, and by way of eminence. Now how can the Spirit convey comfort to such persons? to whom, if he reports the truth, as the Spirit of truth can do no otherwise, he must tell them that they are aliens to Christ, strangers to the covenant, enemies to God, haters of him, and therefore hated by him. Now if these can be arguments of comfort, then he that resists God's Spirit may be comforted.

(2.) The second way by which the Spirit comforts a man, is by discovering to him that grace that is within him: that is, not only by clearing up God's love to him, but also by making him see his love to God. The strength of this, as it is an argument of comfort, lies here. Because our love to God it is the proper effect, and therefore the infallible sign of God's love to us, which is the great basis and foundation of all comfort. We therefore love because we were first beloved. But can the love of God abide in him who resists and does despite to his Spirit? Can any one at the same time fight like an enemy and love like a friend? The sinner cannot give any true evidence of his love to God, inasmuch as a continual obstinate resistance of the Spirit is inconsistent with grace; and it implies a contradiction for any one to love God, and to oppose that Spirit, that is a Spirit of love.

And thus it is clear, that such as resist the Spirit's strivings cannot share in his comforts. And how unconceivably sad and miserable it is to want them, none know so much as those that have wanted them. If God should let loose all the sorest afflictions of this life upon you, and should awaken your consciences to accuse you, and withal possess your guilty despairing souls with a lively sense of his wrath for sin, and fill you with the terrors of hell, so that you should even roar by reason of the disquietness of your hearts, as he had done to some, and particularly to David, you would then know what it is to have the Spirit as a comforter. However, when you come to look death in the face, and are upon your passage into eternity, and presently to appear before God in judgment, then you will prize the comforts of the Spirit. And if you ever hope to enjoy them at that disconsolate hour, beware how you resist his strivings now.

2. The second motive why we should comply with the Spirit is, because the resisting of it brings a man under hardness of heart and a reprobate sense. Now a man is then said to be under a reprobate sense, when he has lost all spiritual feeling; so that when heaven and the joys thereof are displayed before him, he is not at all affected with desire; when hell and wrath and eternal misery are held forth to him, he is not moved with terror. Now resisting of the Spirit brings this hardness upon the heart two ways.

(1) By way of natural causation. Hardness of heart is the



proper issue and effect of this resistance. Every act of opposition to the Spirit disposes the soul to resist it further. As the reception of one degree of heat disposes the subject to receive the second, and the second the third, till it arrives to the highest. And the more frequent the Spirit's workings have been, the heart grows more insensible and hard; as a path, by often being trod, is daily more and more hardened. Custom in sin produces boldness in sin; and we know boldness is for the most part grounded upon the insensibility of danger.

(2.) This resistance brings hardness of heart, by way of a judicial curse from God. It causes God to suspend his convincing and converting grace; whereupon the sinner is more and more established and confirmed in his sin. It is not to be questioned, but the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, at the time of his destruction, had in it something of punishment as well as sin; and was penally inflicted upon him as a judgment of his irrational hardness under God's former judgments. I shall allege no more examples; this is sufficient to demonstrate how dreadful a thing it is to be punished with a hard heart. It is this alone (to say no more of it) that renders all the means of a man's salvation utterly ineffectual.

3. The third motive is, because resisting of the Spirit puts a man in the very next disposition to the great and unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. For this dreadful sin is only a greater kind of resistance of the Spirit. And all the foregoing acts of resistance are like so many degrees and steps leading to this. For since a man cannot presently and on the sudden arrive to the highest pitch of sin, there are required some previous antecedent dispositions to enlarge, and, as it were, make room in the heart for the admission of so great a sin as this. All former oppositions of the Spirit empty their malignity into this one, which virtually includes them all, as rivers empty themselves into the sea. It is confessed a man may frequently oppose the Spirit, and yet not commit this great sin; yet none ever committed this sin, but such as had before frequently resisted the Spirit. Some indeed make the sin against the Holy Ghost to be only a blasphemous rejection of the external objective testimony of the Spirit, that is, of his miracles, by which he attested the truth of the gospel, so as to ascribe them to the devil. But as for a wilful, malicious opposing of the internal efficient persuasion of the Spirit upon the heart, they doubt whether the nature of man is capable of such an act. Here, not to exclude the former from being the sin against the Holy Ghost, certain it is, that the general judgments of divines do agree in the latter. And Heb. vi. 4—6 seems not obscurely to evince the same.

And thus you have seen that way marked out before you that leads to the sin against the Holy Ghost. Therefore it nearly concerns all resisters of the Spirit to bethink themselves whither

they are going, and to beware that they do not slide into that that is unpardonable. It is wisdom timely to depart from your sins, before the Spirit finally departs from you. I hope there is none here, that either has or ever shall commit this great sin; yet consider (which certainly is terror enough to a considering mind) that if you go on, and still proceed to resist the Spirit, it is possible that you may. And in things that concern the everlasting ruin of an immortal soul, *miserum est posse si velis*. It is a miserable and a dangerous thing to be able eternally to undo yourselves if you will. Wherefore I should now entreat and advise all, as they desire the comforts of the Spirit, as they tender the good of their precious, never-dying souls, as they wish the unspeakable satisfaction of a peaceable conscience, as they hope to enjoy the refreshing sense of God's love here, and to behold his face with joy hereafter, that they would forbear to resist the strivings of the Spirit; for if we still go on further and further, till we come to resist him so far, he will then seal and fit us for wrath and judgment in this world, and then actually deliver us up to it in the next.

## SERMON XXXII.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SAVING AND A PHARISAICAL  
RIGHTEOUSNESS.

MATTHEW V. 20.

*For I say unto you, That unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

WE have here the great doctor of souls in his sermon upon the mount applying himself to the great business of souls, their eternal happiness and salvation; a thing aimed at by all, but attained by few. And since there can be no rational direction to the end, but what is laid in the prescription of the means, he shows them the most effectual course of arriving to this happiness that is imaginable; and that is, partly by discovering those ways and means by which men come to miss of salvation; and partly by declaring those other ways by which alone it is to be attained. First he shows them how it cannot be acquired; and secondly how it may. It cannot be attained by the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees; it may be attained by such a one as does exceed it.

In order to the understanding of the words, I must premise some short explication of these three things.

First, Who and what these scribes and pharisees were.

Secondly, What is here meant by "righteousness."

Thirdly and lastly, What by "the kingdom of heaven."

And first for the first, who these scribes and pharisees were. It would be both tedious, and as to our present business superfluous, to discourse exactly of the original and ways of the several sects that about the time of our Saviour infested the Jewish church; such as were the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Herodians. Let it suffice us therefore to consider so much of them, as may contribute to the clearing of the text; which is, that these pharisees were a powerful ruling sect amongst the Jews, professing and pretending to a greater sanctity of life and purity of doctrine than any others. Upon which account they gave denomination to their sect from *pharash*, a word importing separation; as that they were men who had sequestered and set apart themselves to the study and pursuit of a more sublime piety and strictness of life than the rest of mankind; as also such as gave the best interpretations of the Mosaic law, not only ex-

pounding, but also correcting and perfecting it where it was defective.

In which respect they struck in with the scribes. For *pharisee* is the name of a sect, *scribe* of an office; and signifies as much as a *doctor*, one whose employment it was to interpret and expound the law to the people in their synagogues. So that in short the scribes and pharisees amongst the Jews were such as owned themselves for the strictest liver and the best teachers in the world.

The second thing to be explained, is what our Saviour here means by "righteousness." The word may have a twofold acception. 1. It may import a righteousness of doctrine; such a one as is to be the rule and measure of the righteousness of our actions. 2. It may import a righteousness in point of practice; that is, such a one as denominates a man just or righteous; as the former properly denominates a man only sound or orthodox.

And now, according to these two senses, as righteousness is twice mentioned in the text; so it is first mentioned in one sense, and then in the other.

The righteousness called by our Saviour "the righteousness of the pharisees" signifies the righteousness taught by the pharisees, which is manifest from the whole drift of the chapter. In all which throughout, it is evidently Christ's design to oppose the purity of his doctrine in the clear exposition of the law, to the corrupt and pernicious expositions that the pharisees gave of the same.

But then the other righteousness called by our Saviour "your righteousness" imports a righteousness of practice, a pious life, or a course of evangelical obedience. So that the sense of our Saviour's words taken more at large runs thus. Unless you pursue and live up to a greater measure of piety than what the scribes and pharisees teach and prescribe you in their perverse and superficial glosses upon the law of Moses, you will find it infinitely short and insufficient to bring you to heaven. Your lives must outdo your lessons. You must step further, and bid higher, or you will never reach the price and purchase of a glorious immortality.

The third and last thing to be explained, is what our Saviour here means by "the kingdom of heaven." For there are three several significations of it in scripture.

1. It is taken for the state and economy of the church under Christianity, opposed to the Jewish and Mosaic economy; in which sense that known speech both of John the Baptist and of our Saviour is to be understood, in which they told the world, that "the kingdom of heaven was at hand;" that is, that the Mosaic dispensation was then ready to expire and cease, and that of the Messiah to take place.

2. It is sometimes taken for the kingdom of grace, by which

Christ rules in the hearts of men. In which sense those words of his to the young man are to be understood in Mark xii. 34, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." That is, thou art not far from such a frame and disposition of spirit, as fits a man to be my disciple and subject, and so brings him under the spiritual rule of my sceptre.

3. And lastly, it is taken for the kingdom of glory, which is the prime and most eminent acception of it; and which I conceive is intended here; though I deny not but some would have it expounded in the first of these three senses. But besides that the natural aspect of the phrase seems to favour this interpretation, the word "entering into" much more easily denoting a passage into another place, than merely into another state or condition; the same is yet further evident from hence, that an entrance into the kingdom of heaven is here exhibited as the end and reward that men propose to themselves as attainable by the righteousness of their lives; and consequently to commence upon the expiration of them, which therefore can be nothing else but a state of blessedness in another world.

These things premised by way of explication, we may take the entire sense of the words in these three propositions.

1st. That a righteousness is absolutely necessary to the attainment of salvation. Which is an assertion of such self-evidence, and so universally granted by all, in appearance at least, that to cast any remark upon it might at most seem ridiculous, did not so many in the world contradict their profession by their practice; and while they own designs for heaven, yet indeed live and act as if they were candidates of hell, and probationers for damnation.

2dly. As a righteousness is necessary, so every degree of righteousness is not sufficient to entitle the soul to eternal happiness. It must be such a one as exceeds, such a one as stands upon higher ground than that which usually shows itself in the lives and conversation of the generality of mankind.

3dly. And more particularly, that righteousness that saves and lets a man into the kingdom of heaven, must far surpass the best and the greatest righteousness of the most refined and glistering hypocrite in the world. Which proposition, as virtually containing in it both the former, shall be the subject of the following discourse. And the prosecution of it shall lie in these three things.

I. To show the defects of the hypocrite's righteousness, here expressed by "the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees," and declared for such a one as cannot save.

II. To show those perfections and conditions by which the righteousness that saves and brings to heaven does transcend and surpass this.

III. And lastly, to show the grounds and reason of the necessity of such a righteousness in order to a man's salvation.

I. And first, for *the defects of the hypocritical, pharisaical righteousness*, we may reckon several.

1. As first, that it consisted chiefly in the external actions of duty; never taking care of the inward deportment of the soul, in the regulation of its thoughts, wishes, and affections; in the due composure of which consists the very spirit and vital part of religion. The pharisees taught the Jews that he who imbrued not his hand in his brother's blood was no murderer, and that he who defiled not his neighbour's bed could not be charged with a violation of that command that forbade adultery. So that it seems, according to them, a man might innocently burn with malice and revenge, lustful and impure thoughts, so long as he could keep the furnace stopped, and prevent them from breaking forth and raging in gross outward commissions. Thus, as our Saviour told them, making clean the outside of the platter, and smoothing the surface of their behaviour, while their inward parts were full of all noisomeness, filth, and abomination. The hypocrite and the pharisee, like some beasts, are only valuable for their skin and their fine colours: so that after all their flourishes of an outward dissembled piety, all those shows of abstinence and severity, by which they amuse the eyes of the easy credulous world, we cannot say properly of any one of them, that he is a good man, but only a good sight; and that too, because we cannot see all of him.

Such persons are not the temples or habitations, but the sepulchres of piety; and we know that when we have seen a sepulchre, we have had the best of it: for there is none so ill a friend to his other senses, as to search or look into it any further. The pharisees were thought and accounted by the deluded vulgar the greatest heroes in piety, the highest and most advanced proficient in the school of religion, of all others whatsoever; so that at the same time they were both the glory and the reproach of the rest of their brethren the Jews, whom they seemed to obscure, and even to upbraid, by their vast transcendancy in the ways of sanctity and devotion: and yet our Saviour gives you the very original and spring-head of all those shining performances, in Matt. xxiii. 5, where he tells you, that "all their works they did to be seen of men." It was the eye of the world that they courted, and not the eye of heaven that they feared. Otherwise, surely they would have thought themselves responsible for all the villany and hypocrisy of their hearts; for all their bosom-cabinet-concealed impurities; since all these were as open to the eye of God's searching omniscience, and as odious to the pure eye of his holiness, as murders or robberies committed in the face of the sun, and revenged upon the actors of them by the hand of public justice.

And where these were cherished by the inward affections and approbations of the heart, demure looks, long prayers, and enlarging of phylacteries, were but pitiful, thin arts to recommend

them to the acceptance of that God, who looks through appearances, and pierces into the heart, and ransacks the very bowels and entrails of the soul, rating all our services according to the frame and temper of that. For being a spirit, he judges like a spirit, and cannot be put off with dress and dissimulation, paint and varnish; and the fairest outward actions of duty, not springing from an inward principle of piety, are no better in the sight of him, who abominates nothing more than a foul heart couched under a fair behaviour.

2. A second fault and flaw in this righteousness was, that it was partial and imperfect, not extending itself equally to all God's commands: some of which the pharisees accounted great ones, and accordingly laid some stress upon the observation of them; but some again they accounted but little ones, and so styled them in their common phrase, and show as little regard to them in their practice.

Which defect, as it was eminent in them, so it is also common to every hypocrite in the world, who never comes up roundly to the whole compass of his duty, even then when he makes the most pompous show; but singles out some certain parts, which perhaps suit best with his occasions, and least thwart his corruptions, leaving the rest to those who may like them better. As the proud or unclean person may be liberal and charitable to the poor, frequent in the service of God, abhor a lie or a treacherous action, with many other the like duties, that do not directly grate upon the darling sin that he is tender of: but what says he all this time to those precepts that charge his pride and his uncleanness? God calls upon him to be humble as well as charitable, to be pure and chaste, as well as devout: nor will it suffice him to chop and change one duty for another; he cannot clear his debts, by paying part of the great sum he owes. The obligation of the law is universal and uniform, and carries an equal aspect to every instance of religion lying within the compass of its command. Upon which account it is said, James ii. 10, that "he that offends in one is guilty of all." For by so doing he breaks the whole chain of duty, which is as really broken and divided, by the breach of one link, as if every one of them was taken asunder. Nor is it otherwise in the laws of men. For surely he that is convict of murder, has no cause to excuse that violation of the law upon this account, that he is no thief or traitor: the law is as really, though not as broadly violated, by one transgression, as by a thousand; and whosoever lives, and allows himself in the constant neglect of any one of Christ's commands, and expects to be saved upon the stock of his obedience to the rest of them (though even the supposition of such an obedience is absolutely impossible), that man has a hope altogether as absurd, sottish, and ridiculous, in reference to his future salvation, as if in the forementioned case a convict murderer should think

to escape the sentence and execution of death, by pleading that he never broke open a house, nor conspired the death of his prince, or bore his share in a public rebellion: how would every one hiss and explode such a defence!

David knew that there was no building any solid confidence upon a parcelled, curtailed obedience; and therefore he states his hope upon such a one as was entire and universal; Psalm cxix. 6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments." Every disappointment certainly draws after it a shame: and whosoever hopes to stand before God's tribunal in the strength of a righteousness maimed in any one integral part of it, will have a defeat and a disappointment cast upon his greatest expectation and his highest concernment; he will be lurchd in that that admits of no after-game or reparation.

God exacts of every soul that looks to enter into the kingdom of heaven a perfect righteousness; perfect, I say, with a perfection of sincerity, which is a perfection of parts, though not of degrees: that is, there is no one grace or virtue but a Christian must have it before he can be saved: though such is the present state of human infirmity, that he cannot in this life attain to the highest degree of that virtue. But as an infant is a man, because he has all the parts of a man, though he has them not in that bulk and strength that those have who are grown up; so he is righteous and sincere, who performs every divine precept, omitting no one of them, though his performances have not that perfection and exactness that is to be found in the obedience of a person glorified and made perfect. However, still we see that universality is required, and an equal compliance with all the divine precepts. For as it is not a handsome eye, a handsome hand, or a handsome leg, but a universal symmetry, and just proportion of all the members and features of the body, that makes a handsome man; so neither is it the practice of this or that virtue, but an entire complexion of all, that must render and denominate a man righteous in the sight of God. And therefore it was infinite folly in the pharisees to be exact in other things, even to the tithing of rue and cummin, and in the mean time to lop off the force and design of a grand precept of the law, by allowing men in some cases not to pay honour to their parents; as we read in Mark vii. 10—13, making it a damnable sin, forsooth, to deprive the priest of a sallad, but a very allowable thing to suffer a parent to starve with hunger. But when such a deluded wretch shall brave up his accounts to God, "that he prayed often, fasted twice a week, payed tithe of all that he had;" what will he answer, when God shall reply upon him, Ay, but friend, what have you done for your distressed father and mother? Your bowels have been shut up to your nearest kindred, and you have not relieved the poor, though recommended with the dearest relation. Then he will find that the performance of one duty can be no recompence for the omission of another.



Men should measure their righteousness by the extent of Christ's satisfaction for sin, which was far from being partial or imperfect; it grasped and comprehended all the sins that either were or could be committed. And if, in the application of this satisfaction to any soul, Christ should take all the sins of it upon his own score, one only excepted, that one sin would inevitably expose it to the full stroke of God's vengeance, and sink it for ever into endless perdition.

Let a man therefore show me any one part of the law, for the transgression of which Christ did not shed his blood; and for the pardon of which the merits of that blood must not be imputed to him, if ever it is pardoned; and I will grant, that in the general rules and obligations of obedience, that part of the law admits of an exception, and consequently obliges not his practice: but Christ knew full well how imperfect a Saviour and Redeemer the world would have found him, had he not paid a price to divine justice for every even the least and most despised deviation from the law. One peccadillo, as some phrase it, if not satisfied for, had been enough to crack and confound the whole system of the creation, and to have lodged the whole mass of mankind eternally in the bottomless pit.

From all which it appears, that the partial, mangled obedience that the hypocrite or the pharisee pays to the divine precepts, can entitle him to no right of entrance into the kingdom of heaven: there is no coming thither with a piece of a wedding garment, with the ragged robe of a half and a curtailed righteousness: and the righteousness of the most eminent unregenerate professor amounts to no more, who is never so clear and entire in duty, but that he has his reserves, his allowances, and exemptions from some severe, troublesome precept or other, that he is resolved to dispense with himself in the observance of; as never worshipping God but with a proviso, that he may still bow in the house of his beloved Rimmon.

3. The third defect of this pharisaical, unsound righteousness is, that it is legal; that is, such a one as expects to win heaven upon the strength of itself and its own worth. Which opinion alone were enough to embase the very righteousness of angels in the sight of God so far, as to render it not only vain, but odious; and to turn the best of sacrifices into the worst of sins. It is an affront to mercy for any one to pretend merit. It is to pull Christ down from the cross, to degrade him from his mediatorship; and, in a word, to nullify and evacuate the whole work of man's redemption. For as St. Paul argues most irrefragably, if righteousness is by the law, then is Christ dead in vain: since upon this supposition there can be no necessity of Christ or Christianity; and the gospel itself were but a needless and a superfluous thing; for it is but for a man to set up and traffic for heaven upon his own stock; and to say to himself, "I will

do this and live; my own arm shall bring salvation to me, and my righteousness shall uphold me."

But who art thou, O vain man, that durst reason thus about thy eternal state? when if God should enter into judgment with the best of his servants, "no flesh living could be justified in his sight:" a sight that endures not the least unpardoned, unremitted transgression; that "charges the very angels with folly." So infinitely exact, searching, and spiritual, is the eye of divine justice, and so vastly great is the prize of glory that we run for, so much higher and more valuable than our choicest and most elaborate performances!

And can we think then, that a few broken prayers, a few deeds of charity, a few fastings, and abstinences, and restraints of our appetites, will carry in them such a commanding, controlling value, as to bear us through God's tribunal, and to make the doors of heaven fly open before us, that we may even with the confidence of purchasers enter and take possession of the mansions of glory? Some perhaps may think so, who suppose they can never think too well of themselves.

But as arrogant as such a thought is, its arrogance is not greater than its absurdity. For as Job says, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" And as our Saviour, "Who can gather figs from thistles?" or the grapes of a perfect righteousness from the briars and thorns of a corrupt and degenerate nature? Since the ruin of our faculties by original sin, let the devoutest and the sincerest Christian in the world bring me the best and the exactest duty that ever he performed, and let him sift, examine, and compare it to the rigid measures of the law, and the holiness of the divine nature, and then let him venture the whole issue of his eternal happiness upon it if he dares. Did men consider how many things go to the making of an action perfectly good, and how many such good actions are required to integrate and perfect a legal righteousness; it were impossible for them to reflect with any fondness upon the very best of their services, which are always allayed with such mixtures of weakness and imperfection.

And therefore let not any pharisee be too confident; for be his righteousness what it will, yet if he hopes to justify himself by it, he will find that persons justified in this manner are never glorified. Men may saint themselves as they please, but if they have nothing to read their saintship in but their own rubric, they may chance to find themselves condemned in heaven, after they have been canonized on earth.

And thus I have shown the three great defects cleaving to the righteousness of the pharisee, who is here represented as the grand exemplar and standard of hypocrisy; all hypocrites more or less partaking of both the nature and defects of the pharisaical righteousness. And if we now grant, as with great truth and

readiness we may, that the pharisee or hypocrite may live up to such glorious externals and visible shows of religion, as to astonish the world with an admiration of his sanctity; so that in the judgment and vogue of all, he shall stand heir apparent to a crown of glory and immortality; which yet in reality and truth he has no more title to, than he who acts the part of a king upon the stage has a claim to a sceptre or a kingdom: then what judgment can we pass upon the generality of men that wear the name of Christians, and upon that account seem big with expectations of a glorious eternity, yet are as much short of a pharisaical righteousness, as that is short of sincerity? Alas! they are not arrived so far as to approve themselves to the eye of the world, so far as to appear godly, or so much as to be mistaken for religious. But by an open sensuality and profaneness, their behaviour seems a constant defiance of heaven, and a confutation of their religion. It were worth the knowing by what reasonings and discourses such men support their minds and reconcile their future hopes to their present practices: for if he, whom the world judges a saint, may yet be "in the gall of bitterness" and "a son of perdition," is it possible that such a one, whose actions proclaim him even to the world for a reprobate and a castaway, should yet indeed be a pious and a sincere person? No, assuredly; for though the piety of a man's outward actions may very well consist with the villany of his heart, yet it is impossible, on the other hand, for a life outwardly bad to be consistent with a heart inwardly good; and those that set forth for heaven in the contrary persuasion and principle, when they meet with hell in their journey's end, will find that they missed of their way.

And thus much for the first thing, which was to show the defects of the hypocritical, pharisaical righteousness. I proceed now to

II. The second, which is to show *those perfections and qualities by which the righteousness that saves and brings to heaven does transcend and surpass that*. Many might be recounted, but I shall insist upon four especially.

1. As first, that it is entirely the same whether the eye of man see it or see it not. It can do its alms where there is no trumpet to sound before it, and pray fervently where there is no spectator to applaud it. It finds the same enlargements and flowings of affection when it pours forth itself before God in private, as when it bends the knee in the solemn resorts of the multitude, and the face of the synagogue. It is contented, that the eye of Omniscience is upon it, and that it is observed by him who sees in secret, as scorning to move upon the inferior motives of popular notice and observation. For it acts by a principle that holds no intercourse with the world, even the pure abstracted

love of God, which would be as active and operative, if there were no other person in the world but him alone in whose breast it is. And therefore there is no external interest that can bear any share in the heat and activity of such a one's devotion. It needs no company to keep it warm. For he transacts with God, and with God alone: so that if he can be heard above, he cares not whether or no he is seen here below.

But it is much otherwise with the hypocrite; his devotion grows cold, if not warmed with the crowd and the throng. He designs not to be, but to appear religious. He can willingly want the inward part of a Christian, so he may be esteemed and commended for the outward. For as it is said of some vain-glorious pretenders to science, that they desire knowledge, not that they may know, but that they may be known: so some affect the garb of the pious and the austere, who abhor the rigours of a real and a practical piety. They can be infinitely pleased with the dress and fashionable part of religion, while they hate and loathe the grim duties of self-denial and mortification. In short, they are like fire painted upon an altar, they desire not to be hot, but only to shine and glisten. And it is this worthy principle that brings so many to the worship of God, only to court the eye of some potent earthly great one, who perhaps commands and lords it over their hopes and their fears; so that when he is present, they will be sure to be so too, and when he is absent, they can be as ready to turn their back upon heaven, and to think it below their occasions, if not also their prudence, to sacrifice business to prayer, which is a thing that they never make their business.

But what would or could such a person plead, should God arrest him in the church, and summon him to his tribunal in the midst of those his solemn mockeries of heaven, and ask him who and what it was that brought him thither to that place? Surely he could not answer, that it was God; for then why should not he be there as well in the absence of the grandee his patron, unless he thought that God also was one of his retinue, and so was nowhere to be found out of his company?

But this very thing makes it but too, too evident, that it is a mortal eye that every such hypocrite adores; so that in all his most solemn addresses he cannot so properly be said to act the Christian, as to act a part. Such pharisees come to church, and frame themselves into postures of zeal and devotion, as women dress themselves, only to be stared upon and admired. If they were sure of no beholders, they would not be fine; for it is the spectator that makes the sight.

I wish all those would lay this consideration to heart who are concerned to do so, and measure the sincerity of that holiness they so much value themselves upon, by this one mark and criterion; for can they answer from their hearts, that it is purely the love of duty that engages them in duty? Is there nothing

of pageantry and appearance that models and directs and gives laws to all the little designs they bring along with them to church? Does not the consideration of what such or such a one will say or think of them bring many to sermons, and, which I tremble to think of, even to the sacrament, who, neither by the necessity or excellency of the duty itself, would ever be induced to vouchsafe their attendance upon it; but could be contented to live without sacraments for ever, and to end their days like heathens and outlaws from all the graces of the second covenant, and the mysteries of Christianity?

If there be any such that hear me, let them lay their hands upon their hearts, and assure themselves, that God loathes all their services, and detests their righteousness, as the highest affront that can be passed upon all his attributes, and consequently has assigned it its reward in the lot and portion of hypocrisy.

But now the sincere and the really holy person apprehends a beauty and a worth in the very exercise of duty, and upon that account still carries the reason of his devotion about him and within him; so that when he has shut to his door, and sequestered himself from the popular gaze, then chiefly he sets himself to the work of prayer and piety, and accounts his closet a temple, and his conscience an amphitheatre.

2. A second property of such a righteousness as is saving and sincere, is, an active watching against and opposing every even the least sin. How small and almost indiscernible is a dust falling into the eye, and yet how troublesome, how uneasy and afflicting is it! Why just so is the least sin in the eye of a sanctified person; the sense of it is quick and tender, and so finds the smallest invasion upon it grating and offensive. We know when David cut off the skirt of Saul's garment, at which time he was far from any hurtful designs upon his person, yet it is said of him, that immediately upon the doing of it "his heart smote him;" so fearful was he lest he might have transgressed the lines of duty, though his conscience did not directly accuse him of any such transgression. Now as solicitous as David was after this action, so cautious and timorous is every sincere person before he attempts a thing. That plea for sin, Is it not a little one? which is the language of every rotten heart, is no argument at all with him for its commission.

For he knows that there is no sin so little, but is great enough to dishonour an infinite God, and to ruin an immortal soul; none so little, but designs and intends to be great, nay the greatest, and would certainly so prove, if not cut off and suppressed by a mature prevention. Every lustful thought left to its own natural course and tendency would be incest, every angry thought murder, and every little grudging of discontent and murmuring would at length ripen into blasphemy and curs-

ing; did not the sanctifying or restraining grace of God interpose between the conception and the birth of most sins, and stifle them in the womb of that concupiscence that would otherwise assuredly bring them forth, and breed them up to their full growth.

And this the new creature in every truly righteous person is sufficiently aware of, which makes him dread the very beginnings of sin, and fly even the occasions of it with horror. For he knows how easily it enters, and how hardly it is got out; how potent and artificial it is to tempt and insinuate, and how weak his heart is to withstand a suitable temptation. He considers also how just it is with God to give those over to the highest pitch and degree of sin, who make no conscience of resisting its beginnings; and withal how frequently he does so, withdrawing the supports and influences of his grace, and leaving the soul, after every yielding to sin, more and more defenceless against the next encounter and assault it shall make upon him. All which considerations of a danger so vastly and incredibly great, are certainly very sufficient to warrant the nicest caution and fearfulness in this case, upon all accounts of prudence whatsoever.

But now if we examine the righteousness of an unsound pharisaical professor by this property, we shall find it far from being thus affected toward sin; it easily connives at and allows the soul in all lesser excursions and declinations from the rule, readily complies with the more moderate and less impudent proposals of the tempter; so that such a one never comes so much as to startle, or think himself at all concerned about the security of his eternal estate, till some great and clamorous sin begins to cry aloud and ring peals of imminent approaching vengeance in his conscience; and then perhaps he looks about him a little, prays twice or thrice, dejects his countenance, and utters a few melancholy words, and so concludes the danger over, his sin atoned, his person safe, and all perfectly well again. But this is a righteousness taken up upon false measures, a righteousness of a man's own inventing, and consequently such a one as can never determine in the peace of him that has it.

But the truly pious is never at rest in his mind, but when he stands upon his guard against the most minute and inobservable encroachments of sin, as knowing them upon this account perhaps more dangerous than greater; that the enemy that is least feared, is usually the soonest felt. For as in the robbing of a house, it is the custom for the sturdiest thieves to put in some little boy at a window, who being once within the house, may easily open the doors and let them in too: so the tempter, in rifling of the soul, despairs for the most part to attempt his entrance by some gross sin of a dismal, frightful hue and appearance, and therefore he employs a lesser, that may creep and slide

into it insensibly; which yet, as little as it is, will so open and unlock the bars of conscience, that the biggest and the most enormous abominations shall at length make their entrance, and seize and take possession of it.

Let no man therefore measure the smallness of his danger by the smallness of any sin; for the smaller the sin, the greater may be the stratagem. We may have heard of those who have been choked with a fly, a crum, or a grape-stone. Such contemptible things carry in them the causes of death; and it is not impossible, though some have had swallows large enough for perjuries, blasphemies, and murders, yet that others may chance to be choked and destroyed with sinful desires, idle words, and officious lies. How many ways a soul may be ruined few consider; those that do, will not count it scrupulosity to beware of the least and slenderest instruments of damnation. But if to be so very nice and suspicious be called by any scrupulosity, such must know, that no scrupulosity about the matters of eternity can be either absurd or superfluous, but in these affairs is only another name for care and discretion.

3. The third discriminating property of a sincere, genuine, and saving righteousness is, that it is such a one as never stops or contents itself in any certain pitch or degree, but aspires and presses forward to still a higher and a higher perfection. As the men of the world, when they are once in a thriving way, never think themselves rich enough; but are still improving and adding to their stock; just so it is with every sanctified person in his Christian course; he will never think himself holy and humble and mortified enough, but will still be making one degree of holiness a step only to another; when he has kindled the fire in his breast, his next business is to make it flame and blaze out. If it were possible for him to assign such a precise measure of righteousness as would save him, yet he would not acquiesce in it; since it is not the mere interest of his own salvation, but of God's honour, that principles and moves him in the whole course of his actions. And then he knows, that if God cannot be too much honoured, he cannot be too righteous; and that if he cannot too intently design the end, he can never too solicitously prosecute the means. It was an expression of a father, concerning the apostle Paul, that he was *insatiabilis Dei cultor*, an insatiable worshipper of God: so that having pitched his mind upon this object, his spiritual appetites were boundless and unlimited.

It is observed of the two nobler senses, the seeing and the hearing, that they are never tired with exerting themselves upon such things as properly affect them; for surely none ever surfeited upon music, or found himself cloyed with the sight of rare pictures. In like manner the desires of the righteous are so suited and framed to an agreeableness with the ways of God, that

they find a continual freshness growing upon them in the performance of duty; the more they have prayed, the more fit and vigorous they find themselves for prayer; like a stream, which the further it has run, the more strength and force it has to run further.

Such persons are carried forth to duty, not upon designs of acquisition, but gratitude; not so much to gain something from God, as (if it were possible) to do something for him. And we all know, that the nature and genius of gratitude is to be infinite and unmeasurable in the expressions of itself. It makes a David cry out as if he even laboured and travailed to be delivered of some of those thankful apprehensions of the divine goodness that his heart was big with. Psalm cxvi. 12, "What," says he, "shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" All that he could do or say for God seemed to him but a short and slender declaration of those boundings of affection, that within he found and felt inexpressible.

But now if we come to try the spurious, unsound righteousness of the hypocrite by this test, how pitiful, how false, and how contemptible a thing will it appear! For he designs not to excel or to transcend in the ways of sanctity. If he can but patch up such a righteousness as shall satisfy and still his conscience, and keep it from grumbling and being troublesome, down he sits, and there takes up, as being far from the ambition of making a proficiency, or commencing any degree in the school of Christ. But believe it, a man may be righteous in this manner long enough before he is like to be saved for being so. For the truth is, such a one does not really design to be righteous, but only to be quiet. And in this one thing you will find a never-failing mark of difference between a pharisaical hypocrite, and a truly sanctified person, that the former measures his righteousness by the peace of his conscience, and the latter judges of the peace of his conscience by his righteousness.

4. The fourth and last property of a sincere and saving righteousness, which most certainly distinguishes it from the hypocritical and pharisaical, is humility. For I dare venture the whole truth of the gospel itself upon this challenge. Show me any hypocrite in the world that ever was humble. For the very nature and design of hypocrisy is, to make a man a proud beggar; that is, by the most uncomely mixture of qualities, at the same time poor and vain-glorious. We have the exact character of him in Rev. iii. 17, "Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; but knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." It is the business of every hypocrite to make a show, to disguise his penury with appearances of plenty and magnificence; and upon that account it concerns him to make the utmost improvement of the little stock he has; to look upon every duty as meritorious, every



prayer as not so much asking a mercy, as claiming a debt from heaven, till at length, as it were, even dazzled with the false lustre of his own performances, he breaks forth into the pharisaical doxology, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men." Thus pluming and priding himself in all his services, as if in every action of piety he did God a courtesy, and passed an obligation upon his Maker.

But how does the sincere person behave himself both in and after every duty performed by him? Surely with a very different spirit. Self-abhorrence and confusion of face, like the poor publican, makes him cast down his eyes while he is lifting up his heart in prayer: and when he has exerted his very utmost zeal in the divine worship, he lays his person and his services in the dust before God, and is so far from expecting a reward for their value, that he counts it a mercy not to be condemned for their imperfection; and though God condemns him not, yet he is ready to condemn himself. "God be merciful to me a sinner," is the constant language of his heart in the conclusion of his choicest performances: for when he has done his best, he knows that it will scarce amount to so much as well: so that if there was not a gospel to qualify and mitigate the rigours of the law, he knows the demands of it were too high and exact to be answered upon the stock of nature, attainted with guilt, and disabled with infirmity. And knowing so much, he never expostulates the injustice or unkindness of God's judgments, be his afflicting hand never so pressing and severe upon him. He acknowledges that severity itself cannot outdo the provocation of his sins; which, though it were possible for God to be cruel, yet had rendered it impossible for him to be unjust. And therefore he kisses the rod, and embraces the scourge, and confesses the righteousness, even where he faints under the burden of an affliction. In a word, after he has done all to purge, purify, and reform himself, he is not yet pleased with himself; but in the very exercise of his graces, finds those flaws, those failures and blemishes, that makes him wonder at the methods and contrivances of divine mercy; that God can be infinitely just, and yet he not infinitely miserable.

Having thus finished the second thing, and shown those perfections and qualities by which the righteousness that saves and brings to heaven does transcend and surpass that of the hypocrite and pharisee; I descend now to

III. The third and last which is to show, *the grounds, the reasons, and causes of the necessity of such a righteousness, in order to a man's salvation, and entrance into the kingdom of heaven.*

1. The first shall be taken from the holiness of God; whose nature will never suffer him to hold so strict and intimate a communion with his creature, as he does with those whom he

admits into heaven, unless the divine image and similitude, defaced by sin, be in some degree repaired and renewed upon him. For surely there is none who admits his swine into his parlour or his bedchamber; and the corruption of man's nature, unmortified, and unremoved by the contrary habits of holiness, degrades a man to the same vileness, the same distance from, and unfitness for, all society with his Maker. It cannot but be the most offensive and intolerable thing to nature, for the healthful and the sound, the curious and the cleanly, to converse with sores and ulcers, rottenness and putrefaction; and yet a soul covered with the leprosy of sin is infinitely more loathsome and abominable in the most pure eyes of God. For how is it possible for truth to cohabit with hypocrisy, purity with filth, and the transcendently holy and spiritual nature of God to associate with lust and sensuality? And these are the endowments, and ornaments, and commending qualifications of every unsanctified person, every hypocrite and pharisee, let him shine with never so fair and bright a reputation in the eye of the credulous and deluded world.

But the matter stops not here. Such a one is unfit for the presence of God, not only upon the account of his impurity, but also of his enmity. For what should a sinner do in heaven, any more than a traitor or a rebel do in court? The exasperated justice of God will prey upon the unpardoned sinner wheresoever it meets him, even in the highest heaven, if it were possible for him to come thither; and whensoever it does so, it is that that makes hell; which is not so properly the name of a place as of a condition; a condition consigning the soul over to endless misery and desperation. And could we imagine a person locally in Abraham's bosom, yet if he brought with him the worm of conscience, and the secret lashes of an infinite wrath, that man were properly in hell, or hell at least in him, wheresoever the place of his abode or residence might fall.

2. The other reason for the necessity of such a transcending righteousness, in order to a man's entrance into heaven, shall be taken from the work and employment of a glorified person in heaven; which is the continual exercise of those graces, which here on earth were begun, and there at length shall be advanced to their full perfection; as also the contemplation of God in all his attributes, together with the whole series of his astonishing actions, by which he was pleased to manifest and display forth those great attributes to the world: whether in creation, by which he exerted his omnipotence in calling forth so beautiful a fabric out of the barren womb of nothing and confusion: or in the several traces and strange meanders of his providence, in governing all those many casualties and contingencies in the world, and so steadily directing them to a certain end, by which he shows forth the stupendous heights of his wisdom and omniscience. And

lastly, in the unparalleled work of man's redemption, by which at once he glorified and unfolded all his attributes, so far as they could be drawn forth into the view of created understandings. Now a perpetual meditation and reflection upon these great subjects is the noble employment of the blessed souls in heaven.

But can any, whom the grace of God has not thoroughly renewed and sanctified, be prepared and fitted for such a task? No, assuredly : and therefore it is worth our observing, that those who, living dissolutely in this world, do yet wish for the rewards of the righteous in the other, commence all such wishes upon a vast ignorance and mistake of their own minds, not knowing how unsuitable, and consequently how irksome the whole business of heaven would be to their unsanctified appetites and desires. For what felicity could it be to a man always accustomed to the revels and songs of the drunkards, to bear a part in the choir of saints and angels, singing forth hallelujahs to him that sits upon the throne? What pleasure could it be to the lustful, the sensual, and unclean person, to follow the Lamb, with his virgin retinue, wheresoever he goes?

Such persons deceive themselves when they wish themselves in heaven; and, in truth, know not what they desire: for however they may dread and abhor hell, yet it is impossible for them to desire heaven, did they know what they were to do there: and therefore instead of making Balaam's wish, that they may "die the death of the righteous," they should do well to live the life of such; and to hearken to Christ commanding them to "seek the kingdom of heaven," by first seeking "the righteousness thereof." For it is righteousness alone that must both bring men to heaven, and make heaven itself a place of happiness to those that are brought thither.

To which the God of heaven and fountain of all happiness vouchsafe to bring us all; to whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

## ADVERTISEMENT

TO

### THE THREE FOLLOWING SERMONS.

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THE following Sermons were first published in 1717, with the following title:—"Posthumous Works of the late Reverend Robert South, D. D., containing Sermons on several subjects; viz., I. On the Martyrdom of King Charles I. II. Ecclesiastical Constitutions to be strictly maintained. III. The certainty of a Judgment after this Life, &c. London: Printed for E. Curll, at the Dial and Bible against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet Street."

The following extracts are taken from the Preface to this Volume:

"It is generally expected that upon publishing the Posthumous Works of any Author, some account should be given of them; therefore the editor of these remains of the learned Dr. South, thinks himself obliged to offer the following particulars, both for the reader's information and satisfaction.

"The three sermons were given by Dr. South himself to Dr. Aldrich, late Dean of Christ Church, in Oxford.

"As to the first of them, that upon the 30th of January, it was preached at Court, and from some passages in it, I think it is pretty plain that it must have been soon after the restoration of his most sacred majesty King Charles the Second. This discourse was printed

some years ago; but besides a large paragraph which is enclosed between crotchets in the 6th page,\* there are many considerable amendments and corrections throughout.

“The second, entitled ‘Ecclesiastical Constitutions to be strictly maintained,’ has been lately published, but from so imperfect a copy, that there is not one single paragraph in it truly printed.

“The third, ‘Upon a Future Judgment,’ was preached at St. Mary’s Church, in Oxford; and from a passage in it, and by the conclusion, it is apparent that it must have been composed for the anniversary of the Royal Martyr.’

The first Sermon, with various emendations and corrections, will be found in the second volume of the present edition, pp. 302—321. The second Sermon appears also to have been revised and improved by the author, and is given in the same volume, pp. 476—498

\* See page 493 of this volume.

## SERMON XXXIII.

ON THE MARTYRDOM OF KING CHARLES I.

[Preached at Court, on the 30th of January.]

JUDGES XIX. 30.

*And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such thing done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt unto this day; consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds.*

THERE is a certain fatal pertinency in the very phrase of the text; for when there were judges, there was no king in Israel, though as to the present purpose, they were judges of another nature that removed ours. We have an account of this prodigious and horrid action, clothed with all the circumstances of wonder and detestation, but yet well timed for its commission, it being done when, upon the want of the regal power, Judges xxi. 25, "every man did what was right in his own eyes;" or, in another dialect, "as the Spirit moved him." And as for the authors of this execrable fact, we have them defending themselves with their swords, and for some time asserting their villany, with their success and victory against their brethren, twice beaten and massacred before them in a righteous cause, as you may see in the next chapter.

I do not profess myself either delighted or skilled in mystical interpretations, and to wiredraw the sense of the place, so as to make it speak the death of the king; as some who can interpret scripture, as if the whole book of God was only to tell things transacted in England and Scotland: so that there cannot be so much as a house fired, or a leg broken, but they can find it in Daniel or the Revelations. No, I pretend to no such skill; it is enough for me if I bring the present business and the text together, not by design, but accommodation: and as the phrase runs full and high, so I doubt not but to find such a parallel in the things themselves, that it may be a question whether of the two may have a better claim to the expression. The cause here, which was worded with so high aggravations, was an injury done to one single Levite, in the villanous rape of his concubine; the resentment of which was so great, that it engaged the rest of the tribes to revenge his quarrel with a civil war, in which the pre-eminence and conduct was given by God's appointment to the

royal tribe of Judah. The sceptre being most concerned to assert the privileges and revenge the injuries of the crosier. We have the Benjamites sturdily abetting what they had impiously done, and for a while victorious in villany, by the help of God's providence, trampling on those that fought by the warrant of his precept.

Let us now see the counterpart: he that dates the king's murder from the fatal blow given on the scaffold, judges like him that thinks it is the last stroke that fells the tree; the killing of his person was only the consummation of his murder, first begun in his prerogative. We have heard the knack of a double capacity, personal and politic, and I suppose they distinguish the king into two, that each party might murder him under one. And for those whose loyalty does only consist in designing that action which was taken out of their hands, and having laid the premises they protest against the conclusion; they cover their prevarication with a fig-leaf, and only differ from the other party in this, that these endeavour to disguise the author of the fact, those only the executioner. Well then; when a long sunshine of mercy had ripened the sins of the nation, so that it was now ready for the shatterings of divine vengeance; the seed of faction and rebellion having been for a long time studiously sown by schismatical doctrines, and well watered by seditious lectures, the first assault was made against the tribe of Levi, by some implacable enemies of the church, the fury of whose lust and ambition nothing could allay, till they had full scope to prostitute her honour, and ravish her revenues: till at length, cut, divided, torn in pieces as she was, she lay a ghastly spectacle to all beholders, to all the Israel of God.

And as this was done to our English Levites, so it was acted by Benjamites, by so many Benjamites, as raven like wolves, till by their rapine and sacrilege they had their mess five times bigger than their brethren's. The prosecution of which quarrel was armed by the royal standard, and the defence of the church managed by the defender of the faith; in which it pleased the all-wise God to cause Judah to fall before Benjamin, the lion to be a prey to the wolf; by which fatal trace of Providence, the king being killed long before forty-five: by natural and immediate sequel to complete the action, Charles was murdered in forty-eight. And this is the black subject of this day's solemnity. In my reflections upon which, if detestation (that is, a due apprehension of the blackest fact that ever the sun saw, since he withdrew upon the suffering of our Saviour) chance to give an edge to some of my expressions, let those know, the nature of whose actions has made the truth look like a sarcasm, and descriptions sharper than invectives: I say, let these censurers know (whose innocency lies only in the act of indemnity), that to drop the blackest ink, and the bitterest gall upon this fact, is not satire, but propriety.

Now since the text says, "there was no such thing ever done or seen," the proper prosecution of the words, all applied to this occasion, must be to show wherein the strangeness of this deed consists; and since the nature of every particular action is to be learnt by reflecting upon the agent and the object, with all the retinue of circumstances that attend it, under a certain determination, I shall accordingly distribute my following discourse into these materials: I shall

- I. Consider the person who suffered.
- II. Show the preparation or introduction to his suffering.
- III. Show you the qualities of the agents who acted in it.
- IV. Describe the circumstances and manner of the fact.
- V. Point out the destruction and grim consequences of it. Of all which in their order.

I. He that suffered was a king, and, what is more, such a king as was not chosen, but born to it; owing his kingdom, not to the voice of popularity, but the suffrage of nature; he was a David, a saint, a king, but never a shepherd: all the royal blood in Christendom ran in his veins, i. e. many kings went to the making up of him, and his improvement and education fell in ways not below his extraction. He was accurate in all the commending excellencies of human accomplishments, able to deserve, had he not inherited a kingdom: of so controlling a genius, that in every science he did not so much study as reign, he appeared not only a proficient, but a prince; and, to go no further for a testimony, let his own writings serve for witness, which speak him no less an author than a monarch, composed with such an unfailing accuracy, such a commanding, majestic pathos, as if they had been written not with a pen, but a sceptre; and as for those whose virulent and ridiculous calumnies ascribe that incomparable work to others, it is a sufficient argument that those did not, because they could not write it. It is hard to counterfeit the spirit of majesty, and the inimitable peculiarities of an incommunicable genius. At the council table he had ability enough to give himself the best counsel, but the unhappy modesty to diffide in it, indeed his only fault, for modesty is a paradox in majesty, and humility is a solecism in supremacy.

Look we next on his piety and incomparable virtues, though without any absurdity I may say, that his very endowments of nature were supernatural; so pious was he, that if others had measured their obedience to him, by his to God, he had been the most absolute monarch in the world. As eminent for frequenting the temple, as Solomon for building one: no occasions ever interfered with his devotion, nor business out-dated his time of attendance in the church. [And here I should not pay a due tribute to his memory, did I forget that remarkable instance of constancy of soul (not to be shocked by the severest strokes of



ill fortune), with which he received the surprising news of the sudden loss of a dear friend and faithful servant, sacrificed by a vile assassin to the unjustifiable and groundless clamours of an ill-informed people, as well as to private spleen. How gallantly in this affair did he suppress human nature, and restrain that flood of tears due to the memory of his friend, till he had finished his duty towards God.] So firm was he in the protestant cause, though he lay in the midst of temptation, in the very bosom of Spain, and though France lay in his, yet nothing could alter him, but he espoused the cause of his religion more than his beloved queen. He ever filled the title under which we prayed for him. He could defend religion as a king, dispute for it as a divine, and die for it as a martyr. I think I shall speak a great truth in saying, that the only thing that makes protestantism considerable in Christendom, is the church of England, and the only thing that does now cement and confirm the church of England is the blood of that blessed martyr. He was so well skilled in all controversies, that we may well style him, in all causes ecclesiastical, not only supreme governor, but moderator, nor more fit to fill the throne than the chair; and withal, so exact an observer and royal rewarder of all such performances, that it was an encouragement for a man to be a divine under such a prince. Which piety of his was set off with a whole train of moral virtues. His temperance was so great and impregnable amidst all those allurements with which the courts of kings are apt to melt the most stoical and resolved minds, that he did at the same time both teach and upbraid the court; so that it was not so much their own vices, as his virtue, that rendered their debauchery inexcusable. Look over the whole race of our kings, and take in the kings of Israel to boot, and who ever kept the bonds of conjugal affection so inviolate? David was chiefly eminent for repenting in this matter; Charles for not needing repentance. None ever of greater fortitude of mind, which was more resplendent in the conquest of himself, and in those miraculous instances of his passive valour, than if he had strewn the field with the rebels' arms, and to the suffrage of his own cause, joined the success of theirs; and yet, withal, so meek, so gentle, so merciful, and that even to cruelty to himself, that if ever the lion dwelt with the lamb, if ever courage and meekness were united, it was in the breast of this royal person; and, which makes the rebellion more ugly and intolerable, there was scarce any person of note among his enemies, who did not wear his colours, and carry some particular mark of his favour and obligations; some were his own menial servants, and eat bread at his table, before they "lifted up their heel against him;" some received from him honours, some offices and employments. I could mention particulars of each kind, did I think their names fit to be heard in a church or from a pulpit. In short, he so

behaved himself toward them, that their rebellion might be malice indeed, but could not be revenge.

And these his personal virtues shed a suitable influence upon his government for the space of seventeen years; the peace, plenty, and honour of the English nation spread itself even to the envy of all neighbouring countries; and when that plenty had pampered them into unruliness and rebellion, yet still the justice of his government left them at a loss for an occasion to rebel, till at last ship-money was pitched upon as fit to be reformed by excise and taxes, and the burden of the subjects taken off by plunderings and sequestrations. The king now, to scatter that cloud which began to gather, and look black upon the church and state, made those condescensions to their impudent petitions, that they had scarce any thing to make war for, but what was granted them already; and having thus stripped himself of his prerogative, he left it clear to the world, that there was nothing left for them to fight for, but only his life. Afterward, in the prosecution of this unnatural war, what overtures did he make for peace? Nay, when he had his sword in his hand, his armies about him, and a cause to justify him before God and man, how did he choose to compound himself into nothing! to depose and unking himself by their hard and inhuman conditions! But all was nothing: he might as well compliment a mastiff, or court a tiger, as think to win those who were now hardened in blood, and thorough-paced in rebellion. Yet the truth is, his conscience uncrowned him, as having a mind too pure and delicate to admit of those maxims and practices of state, that usually make princes great and successful.

Having thus, with an unheard-of loyalty, fought against him and conquered him, they commit him to prison, and the king himself notes, that it has always been observed, that there is but little distance between the prisons of kings and their graves; to which I subjoin, that where the observation is constant, there must be some standing cause of the connexion of the thing observed; and indeed, it is a direct translation from the prison to the grave; the difference between them being only this; that he who is buried is imprisoned under ground, and he that is imprisoned is buried above ground; and I could wish, that as they slew and buried his body, so we had not also buried his funeral.

But to finish this poor and imperfect description, though it is of a person so renowned, that he neither needs the best, nor can be injured by the worst: yet, in short, he was a prince whose virtues were as prodigious as his sufferings; a true father of his country, if but for this only, that he was father of such a son. And yet the most innocent of men, and best of kings, so pious and virtuous, so learned and judicious, so merciful and obliging, was rebelled against, drove out of his own house, pursued as a partridge on the mountains, like an eagle in his own dominions,

inhumanly imprisoned, and, for a catastrophe of all, most barbarously murdered : though in this his murder was the less woful, in that his death released him from his prison.

II. Having thus seen the person suffering, let us in the next place see *the preparations of this bloody fact* ; and indeed it would be but a preposterous course, to insist only on the consequent, without taking notice of the antecedent. It were too long to dig to the spring of this rebellion, and to lead up to the secresies of its first contrivance ; but as David's phrase is, upon another occasion, it was " framed and fashioned in the lowest parts of the earth," and there it was " fearfully and wonderfully made," a work of darkness and retirement, removed from the eye of witnesses, even that of conscience also ; for conscience was not admitted into their council. But their first aim was to procure a Levite to consecrate their design, and a factious ministry to christen it the cause of God : they still own their party for God's own Israel, and being so, it must needs be their duty to come out of Egypt, though they provide themselves a Red sea for their passage.

For their assistance they repair to the northern steel, and bring in an unnatural mercenary crew, that like a shoal of locusts covered the land, such as inherited the description of those which God brought upon his people the Jews ; " a nation fierce, peeled, and scattered ;" and still we shall read that God punished his people from the north, as Jer. i. 3, " Out of the north comes destruction, which shall make the land desolate." Jer. iv. 6, " I will bring evil from the north, and great destruction." Now to endear and unite these into one interest, they invented a covenant, much like to that which some are said to make with hell, and an agreement with death. It was the most solemn piece of perjury, the most fatal engine against the church, and bane of monarchy ; the greatest snare of souls, and mystery of iniquity, that ever was hammered out by the wit and wickedness of man. I shall not, as they do, abuse scripture language, and call it the blood of the covenant, but give it its proper title, the covenant of blood ; such a one as the brethren Simeon and Levi made, when they were going about the like designs ; their very posture of taking it was an ominous mark of its intent ; and their holding up their hands was a sign they were going to strike. It was such an olio of treason and tyranny, that one of the assembly of their own prophets gives this testimony of it, in his narration upon it (and his testimony is true), " that it was such a covenant, that whether you respect the subject matter of it, or the occasion of it, or the persons engaged in it, or lastly the manner of imposing it, the like was never read, seen, or heard of." The truth is, it bears no other likeness to other ancient covenants, than as at the making of them they slew beasts and divided them, so this was

solemnized with blood, slaughter, and division. But that I may not accuse in general, without a particular charge; read it over as it stands prefixed to their catechisms (as if without it their system of divinity was not complete, nor their children like to become Christians, unless they were schooled to treason, and catechized to rebellion); I say, in the covenant as it stands here in the third article of it; after they had first promised to defend the privileges of parliament, and the liberties of the kingdom, at length they also promised to defend the person of the king, viz. in the preservation and defence of the true religion, and the liberties of the kingdom; so that their promise of loyalty to him was not absolute, but conditional, bound hand and foot with this stipulation, so far as he preserveth the true religion and liberties of the kingdom. Now those very persons who covenanted thus, had already from pulpit and press declared the religion and way of worship established in the church of England, and then maintained by the king, to be false, popish, and idolatrous; and withal, that the king had invaded their liberties. Now for men to suspend their obedience upon certain conditions, which very conditions they declared at the same time not performed, was not to profess obedience, but remonstrate the reasons of intended disobedience. We have seen the doctrine of the covenant; see now the use of this doctrine, as it was charged home with a suitable application, in a war raised against the king, in the cruel usage and imprisonment, killing, sequestering, and undoing of all that adhered to him. All which home proceedings, though his majesty now stupendously forgives, yet the world will not, cannot yet forget: his indemnity is not an oblivion: and for those persons who now clamour and cry out, they are persecuted, because they are no longer permitted to persecute; and who choose rather to quit the ministry, than disown the obligation of the covenant, I leave to all impartial and understanding minds to judge, whether they do not by this openly declare to the world, that they hold themselves obliged by oath, as they are able, to act over again all that hath hitherto been done by virtue of the covenant, and consequently that they left not places for being nonconformists to the church, but for being virtually rebels to the crown; which makes them just as worthy to be indulged, as a dropsy or a malignant fever, which is exasperated by mitigations, and inflamed by every cooling infusion.

But to draw the premises closer to the purpose, I argue: that which was the proper means to enable the king's enemies to make war against him, and upon that war to conquer, and upon that conquest to imprison, and inevitably to put the power in the hands of those who by that power in the end did murder him; that, according to the genuine consequence of reason, was the natural cause of his murder. This is the proposition that I assert, but I shall not trouble myself to make the assumption;

and indeed those who wipe their mouths, and lick themselves innocent by clapping this act upon the army, make just the same plea that Pilate did for his innocency in the death of Christ, because he left the execution to the soldiers; or what the soldiers may make for clearing themselves of all this blood that they have spilt, by charging it upon their swords. I conclude therefore, that this was the gradual process to this horrid act, this the train laid to blow up monarchy, this the step by which the king ascended the scaffold.

III. Come we now in the third place to show *who were the actors in this tragic scene*. When through the anger of Providence, the thriving army of rebels had worsted justice, cleared the field, subdued all oppositions and risings, even to the very insurrections of conscience itself; so that impunity at length grew into reputation of piety, and success gave rebellion the varnish of religion; that they might consummate their villany, the gown was called in to complete the execution of the sword; and to make Westminster Hall a place to take away lives as well as estates, a new court was set up, and judges packed, who had no more to do with justice, than so far forth as they deserved to be the objects of it; in which they first begin with a confutation of the civilians' notion of justice and jurisdiction, it being with them no longer an act of the supreme power. Such an inferior crew, such a mechanic rabble were they, having not so much as any arms to show the world, but what they used in rebellion; that when I survey the list of the king's judges, and the witnesses against him, I seem to have before me a catalogue of all trades, and such as might have better filled the shops of Westminster Hall, than sat on the benches; some of which came to be possessors of the king's houses, who before had no certain dwelling but the king's highway; and some might have continued tradesmen still, had not want and inability to trade sent them to the war. Now that a king, such a king, should be murdered by such, the basest of his subjects, and not like a Nimrod (as some sanctified preachers have called him), but like Actæon, torn by a pack of blood-hounds; that the steam of a dunghill should thus obscure the sun; this so much enhanceth the calamity of his royal person, and makes his death as different from his who is conquered and slain by another king, as it is between being torn by a lion, and being eaten up by vermin; pardon the expression, for it came into my mind by speaking of those, many of which were some time beggars. For the feet to trample upon, yea kick at the head, would it not look like a monster? but indeed, these of all others were the fittest instruments for such a work; for base descent and poor education disposeth the mind to impiety and cruelty; as of beasts those are the most savage, which are bred in dens, and have their extraction from under ground: these therefore

were the worthy judges and condemners of that great king; even the refuse of the people, and the very scum of the nation, that was at that time both the uppermost and basest part of it.

IV. Pass we now in the fourth place to *the circumstances and manner of proceeding in this ugly fact*. And the circumstances we know have the greatest cast in determining the nature of all actions, as we judge of any one's parts or qualities by the nature of his attendants. First, then, it was not done like other works of darkness, in secret, nor (as they use to preach) in a corner, but publicly, coloured with the face of justice, managed with openness and solemnity, as solemn as the league and covenant itself. History indeed affords us many examples of princes clandestinely murdered, which though it be villanous, is in itself more excusable; for he that doth such a thing in secret, by the manner of doing confesseth himself ashamed of the thing he does; but he that acts in the face of the sun, vouches his work for laudable, glorious, and heroic. Having brought him to the high court of justice (so called, I conceive, because justice was there arraigned and condemned, or perhaps because it never showed mercy), by a way of trial as unheard-of as the court, he was not permitted so much as to speak in his own defence, but with the innocence and silence of a lamb, condemned to slaughter; and it would have been well for them if they could as easily have imposed silence on his blood. Being condemned, they spit in his face, and delivered him to the mockery and affronts of the soldiers; so that I wonder where the blasphemy lies, which some charge upon those who made the king's suffering something to resemble our Saviour's; but is it blasphemy to compare the king to Christ in that respect, in which Christ himself was made like a servant? For can he be like us in all things, and we not like him? Certainly there was something in that providence, that appointed so long ago the chapter to be read on the day of our Saviour's passion, to be read likewise on the day of our king's; and I am sure that the resemblance is so near, that had he lived before him, he had been a type of him. I confess there is some disparity in the case, for they showed themselves worse than the Jews. But however, since they object that we make the king like Christ, I am willing it should be their commendation to be as unlike Christ as they please.

Let us now follow him from their mock-tribunal to the place of his residence till his execution. Nothing remains for a man condemned, and presently to leave the world, but these two things: first, to take leave of his friends, a thing not denied to the vilest malefactor, which is sufficiently apparent in that it hath not been denied to themselves: yet no entreaties, from him or his royal consort, could prevail with these murderers to let her take the last farewell and commands of her dying husband. He was

permitted to take no farewell, but to the world. Thus was he stripped of all, even from the prerogative of a prince, to the privilege of a malefactor. The next thing desired by all dying Christians, is freedom to converse with God, and to prepare themselves to meet him at his dreadful tribunal; but with an Italian cruelty to the soul as well as the body, they debar him of this freedom also, and even solitude, his former punishment, is now too great an enjoyment. But that they might show themselves no less enemies to private, than they had been to public prayers, they disturb his retirements, and with scoffs and continual calumnies upbraid those devotions which were then interceding for them; and I question not but fanatic fury was at that height, that they would have laughed at Christ himself had he used his own prayer.

With these preludiums is he brought to the last scene of mockeries and cruelty, to a stage erected before his own palace, and for a greater affront to majesty, before that part of it in which he was wont to display his royalty, and to give audience to ambassadors, where now he could not obtain audience for himself, in his last addresses to his abused subjects. There he receives the fatal blow; there he dies conquering and pardoning his enemies, and at length finds that faithfully performed on the scaffold, which was at first promised in the parliament, and perhaps in the same sense, that he should be "a glorious king." And even this death was the mercy of the murderers, considering what kind of death several proposed when they sat in council about the manner of it, even no less than to execute him in his robes, and afterwards to drive a stake through his head and body to stand as a monument on his grave. In short, all kinds of death were proposed, that either their malice could suggest, or their own guilt deserve. And would these then now find in their hearts, or have the face to desire to live? and to plead a pardon from the son, who thus murdered the father? I speak not only of those wretches who openly imbrued their hands in the bloody sentence, but of those more considerable traitors who had the villany to manage the contrivance, and yet the cunning to disappear at the execution, and perhaps the good luck to be preferred after it. And for those who now survive, by a mercy as incredible as their crimes, which has left them to the soft expiation of solitude and repentance; though usually all the professions that such make of repentance, are nothing else but the faint resentments of a guilty horror, the convulsions and last breathings of a gasping conscience: as the mercy by which they live is made a visible defiance to government, and a standing encouragement to these alarms of plots and conspiracies: so I beseech God that even their supposed repentance be not such, as both themselves and the kingdom hereafter may have bitter cause too late to repent of. And if indeed they should prove such as have no con-

science but horror, who by the same crimes will be made irreconcilable, for which they deserve to be unpardonable; who would resume those repentings upon opportunities, which they made upon extremity; and being saved from the gallows, make the usual requital that is made for that kind of deliverance; I say, if such persons should only for a time be chained, and tied up, like so many lions in the Tower, that they may gain more fierceness, and run again at majesty, religion, laws, churches, and the universities; whether God intends by this a repetition of our former confusions, or a general massacre of our persons (which is most likely), the Lord in his mercy fit and enable us to endure the smart of a misimproved providence, and the infatuated frustration of such a miraculous deliverance.

But to return to this blessed martyr. We have seen him murdered, and is there any other scene of cruelty to act? Is not death the end of the murderer's malice, as well as of the life of him that is murdered? No, there is another and viler instance of their implacable cruelty; in the very embalming of his body, and taking out of his bowels (which, had they not relented to his enemies, had not been so handled), they gave order to those to whom that work was committed, diligently to search and see (I speak it with shame and indignation) whether his body was not infected with some loathsome disease: I suppose, that which some of his judges were so much troubled with. Now any one may see, that further to intimate an inquiry was, in effect, to enjoin the report. And here let any one judge, whether the remorseless malice of embittered rebels ever rose to such a height of tyranny; the very embalming his body must be made a means of corrupting his name; as if his murder was not complete, if, together with his life they did not assassinate his fame and butcher his reputation. But the body of that prince, innocent and virtuous even to a miracle, had none of the ruins and genteel rottenness of our modern debauchery; it was firm and clear like his conscience; he fell like a cedar, no less fragrant than tall and stately; rottenness of heart and bone belong to his murderers, the noisomeness of whose carcasses, caused by the noisomeness of their lives, might even retaliate and revenge their sufferings, and while they are under the execution, poison the executioner. But the last grand comprehensive circumstance, which is, as it were, the very form and spuit that did actuate and run through all the rest, is, that it was done with the pretence of conscience, and the protestations of religion, with eyes lift up to heaven, expostulating with God with pleas of providence, and inward instigations, till at last, with much labour and many groans, they were delivered of their conceived mischief. And certainly we have cause to deplore this murder with fasting, if it were but for this reason, that it was contrived and committed with fasting; every fast portended some villany, as still a famine ushers in a plague: but



as hunger serves only for appetite, so they never ordained a humiliation, but for doing something, which, being done, might find them matter of a thanksgiving; and such a fury did abused piety inspire into the church militant, upon these exercises, that we might as safely meet a hungry boar, as a preaching colonel after a fast, whose murderous humiliations strangely verify that prophecy in Isaiah viii. 21, "When they shall be hungry, they shall curse their king and their God, and look upwards;" that is, they should rebel and blaspheme devoutly: though by the way, he that is always looking upwards can little regard how he walks below.

But was there any thing in the whole book of God to warrant this rebellion? Instead of obedience, will they sacrifice him whom they ought to obey? Why yes: Daniel dreamed a dream, and there is also something in the Revelations concerning a beast, and a little horn, and a fifth vial, and therefore the king ought undoubtedly to die: but if neither you nor I can gather so much from these places, they will tell us it is because we are not inwardly enlightened. But others more knowing, but not less wicked, insist not so much on the warrant of it from scripture, but plead providential dispensations; God's works, it seems, must be regarded before his words; and their Latin advocate, Mr. Milton, who like a blind adder has spit so much poison on the king's person and cause, speaks to this roundly, *Deum secuti ducem, et impressa passim divina vestigia venerantes, viam haud obscuram, sed illustrem, et illius auspiciis commonstratam et patefactam ingressi sumus.*

But must we read God's mind in his footsteps, or in his words? This is as if when we have a man's hand-writing, we should endeavour to take his meaning by the measure of his foot. But still, is pleading conscience a covering for all enormities, and an answer to all questions and accusations also? What made them fight against, imprison, and murder their lawful sovereign? Why, conscience. What made them extirpate the government, and pocket up the revenues of the church? Conscience. What made them perjure themselves with contrary oaths? What made swearing a sin, and forswearing none? What made them lay hold on God's promises, and break their own? Conscience. What made them sequester, persecute, and undo their brethren, ravin their estates, and ruin their families, get into their places, and then say they only rob the Egyptians? Why still this large capacious thing is conscience. The poet says, *Vis fieri dives, Bithynice? conscius esto*; which I think may be properly construed thus, If you would be rich, be (in their sense) conscientious. We have lived under that model of religion, in which nothing has been counted impious, but loyalty, nor absurd, but restitution. But, O blessed God! to what a height can prosperous, audacious impiety rise! Was it not enough that men once crucified Christ, but that there must be a generation of men who would

crucify Christianity? ~~Must~~ he who taught no defence but patience, allowed no armor but submission, and never warranted the shedding any blood but his own, be now again mocked with soldiers, and vouched the author and patron of all those hideous and rebellious acts, which an ordinary impiety would stand amazed at, and which in this world he has so plainly condemned in his word, and will hereafter severely sentence in his own person? Certainly these monsters are not only spots in Christianity, but so many standing exceptions from humanity and nature.

V. In the fifth and last place, let us view *the horridness of the fact, in the fatal consequences that did attend it*. Every villany is like a great absurdity, drawing after it a numerous train of homogeneous consequences, and none ever spread itself into more than this. But I shall endeavour to reduce them all into two sorts; such as were of a civil, and such as were of a religious concern.

And first for the civil, political consequences of it; there immediately followed a change of that government, whose praise had been proclaimed even by its enemies. It was now shred into democracy; and the stream of government being cut into many channels, ran thin and shallow, whereupon the subjects had many masters, and every servant so many distinct services. But the wheel of Providence, which they only looked at, and that even to giddiness, did not stop here, but by a fatal vicissitude, the power and wickedness of those many were again compacted into one, and from that one returning again into many, with several attending variations, till at length we pitched upon one again, one beyond whom they could not go, the *ne plus ultra* of all regal excellencies, as all change tends to, and at last ceases upon its acquired perfection. Nor was the government only, but the glory of our nation also changed; distinctions of orders confounded, the gentry and nobility, who voted the bishops out of their dignities in parliament, by the just judgment of God were thrust out themselves, and brought under the lash of an imperious beggar on horseback. Learning was discountenanced, and the universities threatened; the law to be reformed; the model of the nation to be burnt; such an inundation and deluge of ruin, reformation, and confusion, had spread itself upon the whole nation, that it seemed a kind of resemblance of Noah's flood, in which a few men survived among beasts.

The second sort of consequences were of religious concern. I speak not of the contempts and rebukes lying upon the preachers of those days; for they brought their miseries upon themselves, and had a great deal more cause to curse their own seditious sermons, than to curse Meroz. They sounded the first trumpet to rebellion, and like the saints, had grace to persevere

in what they first began ; courting a usurper, and calling themselves his loyal and obedient subjects, never endeavouring so much as to think of their lawful sovereign. I speak not therefore of these, but the great destructive consequence of this fact was, that it left a lasting slur upon the protestant religion. "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines triumph," lest the papacy laugh us to scorn. I confess the seditious writings of some who call themselves protestants, have sufficiently bespattered their religion. See Calvin warranting the three estates to oppose their prince, 4 Instit. ch. 20, sect. 31. See Mr. Knox's Appeal, and in that, arguments for resisting the civil magistrate. Read Mr. Buchanan's discourse, *De jure regni apud Scotos*. Read *Vindiciæ contra Tyrannos*, under the name of Junius Brutus, written by Ottoman the civilian. See Pareus on the 13th to the Romans, where he states a large term, *atrocem aliquam injuriam*, and a very easy application to be sufficient reason for the taking up arms against the king. But this is rather a comment on the covenant, than on the 13th to the Romans. Both of which, as they teach the same doctrine, so they deserved and had justly the same confutation. But these principles, like sleeping lions, lay still a great while, and never were completely awaked, nor appeared in the field, till the French Holy League, and the English Rebellion. Let the powder-plot be as bad as it will, yet still there is as much difference between that and the king's murder, as between an action and an attempt : what bulls and anathemas could not do, seditious sermons have brought about. What was then contrived against the parliament, has since been done by it : what the papists' powder intended, the soldiers' matches have effected. I say, let the powder-plot be looked upon, as indeed it is, the product of hell, as black as the souls and principles that hatched it ; yet still this reformation-murder will preponderate, and January always have the precedence of November.

And thus I have traced this accursed fact through all the parts and ingredients of it : and now, if we reflect upon the quality of the person upon whom it was done ; the condition of the persons that did it ; the means, manner, and circumstances of its transaction ; I suppose it will fill up the measure, and reach the heights of the words in the text, that "there was never such a thing done or seen since the day that the children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt until this day." For my part, my apprehensions of it overcharge my expressions, and how to set it off I know not, for black receives no other colour : but when I call to mind all the ideas of horror, and all the records of the Grecian and barbarian murders, together with new fancied instances, and unheard-of impossibilities, yet I find none parallel, and therefore have this only to say of the king's murder ; that it is a thing, than which nothing can be imagined more strange, and amazing, and astonishing, except its pardon.

And now having done with the first part of my text, does it not naturally engage me in the second? Must such a deed as was never seen nor heard of, never be spoken of; or must it be stroked with smooth mollifying expressions? Is this the way to cure the wound, by pouring oil upon those that made it? And must Absalom be therefore dealt gently with, because he was a sturdy rebel? If, as the text bids us, we consider the fact, and take advice with reason and conscience, we cannot but obey it in the following words, and speak our minds. For could Croesus's dumb son speak upon the very attempting a murder upon his prince and father, and shall a preacher be dumb when such an action is committed? Therefore having not yet finished my text, nor according to the command of it, spoken all my mind, I have one thing more to propose, and with that to conclude.

Would you be willing to see this scene acted over again? To see that restless plotting humour that now boils and ferments in many traitors' breasts, once more display itself in the dismal effects of war and desolations? Would you see the rascality of the nation in troops and tumults beleaguer the royal palace? Would you hear the ministers absolving their congregations from their sacred oath of allegiance, and sending them into the field to lose their lives and souls in a professed rebellion against their sovereign? Would you see an insolent overturning army in the heart and bowels of the nation, moving to and fro to the terror of every thing that is noble, generous, and religious? Would you see the loyal gentry harassed, starved, and undone, by the oppression of base, insulting committees? Would you see the clergy torn in pieces, and sacrificed by the inquisition of synods, triers, and commissioners? And to mention the greatest last; would you have the king, with his father's kingdoms, inherit also his fortunes? Would you see the crown trampled upon, majesty haled from prison to prison, and at length, with the vilest circumstances of spite and cruelty, bleeding and dying at the feet of bloody inhuman miscreants? Would you, now Providence has cast the destructive interest from the parliament, and the house is pretty well swept and cleansed, have the old "unclean spirit return, and take to itself seven other spirits," seven other interests worse than itself, and dwell there, and so make our latter end worse than our beginning? We hear of plots and combinations, parties joining and agreeing; let us not trust too much in their oppositions among themselves. The elements can fight with each other, and yet unite into one body; Ephraim against Manasses, and Manasses against Ephraim, and both equally against the royal tribe of Judah. Now if we fear the letting loose these furies again upon us, let us fear the returns of our former provocations: if we would keep off the axe from our princes and nobles, let us lay it to our sins; if we would preserve their lives, let us mend our own. We have complained of armies,

committees, sequestrations, but our sins are those that have sucked the blood of this nation. These have purpled the scaffold with royal blood; these have blown up so many noble families, have made so many widows, have snatched the bread out of the mouths of so many poor orphans. It is our not fearing God, that hath made others not honour the king; our not benefiting by the ordinances of the church, that hath enriched others with her spoils. And how is our church (the only church in Christendom we read of, whose avowed principles and practices disown all resistance of the civil power) struck and laid at, at this time! But when I hear of conspiracies, seditions, designs, covenants, or plots, they do not much move or affright me: but when I see the same covetousness, the same drunkenness and profaneness, that was first punished in ourselves, and then in our sanctified enemies: when I see joy turned into revelling, and debauchery proclaimed louder than it can be proclaimed against: these, I confess, stagger and astonish me: nor can I persuade myself we were delivered to do all these abominations. But if we have not the grace of Christians, yet have we not the hearts of men? Have we no bowels nor relentings? If the blood and banishment of our kings, if the miseries of our common mother, the church, ready to fall back into the jaws of purchasers and reformers, cannot move us, yet shall we not at least pity our posterity? Shall we commit sins, and breed up our children to inherit the curse? Shall the infants now unborn have cause to say hereafter, in the bitterness of their souls, "Our fathers have eaten sour grapes" of disobedience, "and our teeth are set on edge" with rebellions and confusions? How doth any one know, but the oath that he is now swearing, the very lewdness he is now committing, may be scored up by God as an item for a new rebellion? We may be rebels, and yet not vote in parliament, nor sit in committees, nor fight in armies; every sin is virtually treason, and we may be guilty of murder in breaking other commandments besides the sixth. But at present we are made whole: God hath by a miracle healed our breaches, cured the maladies, and bound up the wounds of a bleeding nation. What remains now, but that we take the counsel that seconded the like miraculous cure, "go our ways, sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon us." But since our calamities have reached that height, that they give us rather cause to fear a repetition, than a possibility of gradation; I shall dismiss you with the same advice upon a different motive, "Go, sin no more, lest the same evil befall you." Which God of his infinite mercy prevent; even that God, "by whom kings reign and princes decree justice," by whom their thrones are established, and by whom their blood will be revenged. To whom, &c. Amen.

## SERMON XXXIV.

[Preached at Oxford.]

ECCLESIASTICAL CONSTITUTIONS TO BE MAINTAINED,

GALATIANS II. 5.

*To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour ; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*

CHRISTIANITY having been now in the world above sixteen hundred years, there is hardly any condition that can befall the church but may be paralleled, or at least resembled by the condition it has been in, in some place or age before. That which our church labours under at present, is the bold and restless encroachments of many amongst ourselves, upon the bishops and pastors of it.

1st. By an endeavour to cast out of our public worship some ceremonies and usages hitherto received in it ; and instead of submitting to their spiritual governors in such matters, they insolently require of their governors to comply with them, though contrary to their own judgment, and that also backed with truth and reason, as well as law and authority. And then (upon their refusal to yield to such innovators) by traducing them as persons of another religion, of a different Christianity ; and, in a word, as papists and idolaters, for persisting in the use of those ceremonies which, upon the most serious deliberation had about these things, by such as laid down their lives against popery, have by full authority, both ecclesiastical and civil, been established in our church.

Not much unlike this case of ours, we have one mentioned here, in the church of Galatia, and that as early as the times of the apostles themselves ; in which many, both Jews and Gentiles, being converted to Christianity, a great dispute arose, whether the Jewish customs were to be joined with the Christian profession, and, consequently, whether the converted Gentiles ought not to have been circumcised according to the law of Moses, as well as baptized according to the religion of Christ. The Jewish converts, who were most infinitely fond of the Mosaical rites, even after their enrolment under Christ's banner, fiercely contended, not only for the continuance of circumcision amongst themselves, but for obliging the proselyte Gentiles to the same custom also. And in this their error, they were the more confirmed by the example and practice of St. Peter, the great apostle of the circumcision, it being the fate of the church

then, as well as since, to have some of its chief leaders betray the truth and interest of it, by unworthy and base compliances with its enemies. St. Peter, I say, thus judaizing in some things, and that even contrary to his own conscience, as well as to the truth of the gospel (for the text tells us, in the 12th and 13th verses, that it was neither better nor worse than downright dissimulation; and such a one is like a contagious pest, which spreads the infection on many more besides himself), did by his example mightily encourage those Jewish Christians, not only to have confidence in their errors, but also to an expostulation with St. Paul himself, who being an apostle to the Gentiles, both taught and practised quite otherwise; and so far did it carry them, that they questioned the very truth of his doctrine, calling it another gospel, and by no means the same that Christ and the rest of the apostles had taught before, as is intimated in the first chapter and the 9th verse. They reflected also very slightly on his person and apostleship, extolling St. Peter and others as pillars, but despising St. Paul as nothing in comparison. Upon which, St. Paul coming to visit these Galatian converts, with Titus his companion, they press him very earnestly, and with an importunity next to compulsion, to have Titus circumcised, according to their false notion of the necessity of circumcision. And yet, as false as this opinion was, it wanted not some colour of arguments; for might not these Galatians plead, in behalf of the continuance of circumcision, that Christ himself declared, "he came not to destroy the law of Moses, but to confirm and fulfil it?" And was not this circumcision one of the most considerable parts of the law? So considerable indeed, as to be the grand obligation to bind men to all the rest. Did not also Christ command his own disciples to hear and do what the pharisees taught them out of Moses' chair, and did they teach or own any thing equally necessary, or more necessary than circumcision? As a confirmation of all this, did not St. Peter, who was the proper apostle of the circumcision, agree and concur with them in the practice of it, or at least not dissuade them from it; nay, and did not St. Paul himself cause Timothy to be circumcised? And if in this matter there should be any difference between these two apostles, was not the advantage clearly on St. Peter's side, who, having conversed personally with Christ in the flesh, might rationally be presumed to know the true sense and design of the gospel more than St. Paul, who had not that benefit? And consequently that it must be much safer for them in that controversy to adhere to the former than to the latter. Lastly, over and above all, might they not plead themselves extremely scandalized, grieved, and offended, at the disusage of circumcision, which they were sure was at first instituted by God, and never since (for what they could find) forbidden by Christ, but rather, on the contrary, countenanced by his own

practice? These things certainly carry some show of reason in them, and were much more forcible allegations for circumcision, than any that our sectarists bring against our ceremonies; and yet as forcible as they seemed, they had no other effect on St. Paul, than that with great stiffness he rejects both them and those that urged them; and upon a full hearing of the merits of the whole cause, resolves not to give place to them, “no, not for an hour.”

This was the occasion of these words; in which are five particulars worth our observation.

1st. A fierce opposition made by some erroneous private Christians in the church of Galatia against St. Paul, a great apostle, and consequently of prime authority in the church of Christ.

2dly. The cause of this opposition, the violent and unreasonable demands made to him to confirm the practice of a thing as necessary, which in itself was not so.

3dly. The methods taken in this opposition, viz. slandering his doctrine, and detracting from the credit and authority of his person, for withstanding these their encroaching demands.

4thly. The wholesome method made use of by the apostle in dealing with these violent encroachers; that was, not to give place to them in the least, “no, not for an hour.”

5thly. And lastly, the end and design intended by the apostle in this his method of dealing with them, viz. the preservation of the gospel in the truth and purity of it, that those sacred truths might have their due regard among them.

The sum of all which particulars I shall connect into this one proposition, which shall be the subject of this following discourse; namely, that the best and most apostolical way to establish a church, and to secure it in a lasting continuance of the truth and purity of the gospel, is for the governors and ministers of it not to give place at all, or yield up the least received constitution of it to the demands or pretences of such as dissent or separate from it; all which is a plain, natural, undeniable inference from the practice of St. Paul in a case so like ours, that a liker can hardly be imagined. The prosecution of this proposition I shall endeavour to manage under the following heads.

I. I shall consider and examine the pretences alleged by dissenters for our remitting or yielding up any of our ecclesiastical constitutions.

II. I shall show you the natural consequences of such a tame resignation.

III. I shall show what influence and efficacy a strict adherence to the constitutions of the church, and an absolute refusal to part with any of them, is likely to have upon the settlement of the church and purity of the gospel amongst us.

But before I enter upon the discussion of any of these, I must



premise this observation, and rule of all I shall say upon this subject, viz. that the case is altogether the same, of requiring upon the account of conscience forbearance of practices in themselves lawful, through a pretence of their unlawfulness, and an imposing upon the conscience practices in themselves not necessary, upon allegation and pretence of their necessity; which latter was the case between St. Paul and these Galatians, as the former is between our church and the sectarists. Now both of these courses are superstitious, and equally so. For though lewdness and ignorance have still carried the cry of superstition against our church ceremonies; yet (as a learned prelate\* hath fully proved in his visitation sermon) that charge truly recoils upon our dissenters, in the very point and matter before us. For as to urge the practice of a thing indifferent as a part of God's worship, and for itself necessary to be practised (which our church never did, nor does in the injunction of any of her ceremonies), is superstitious; so as to make it necessary to abstain from practices in themselves lawful, or at least indifferent, alleging that they are sinful, and consequently that an abstinence from them is part of our obedience to God, this is altogether as superstitious, and diametrically opposite to and destructive of the Christian liberty that Christ has invested his church with.

I. This premised, I shall now enter upon the first thing proposed; which was to *consider and examine the pretences alleged by dissenters for the quitting or yielding up any of the constitutions of the church*. And here in a noted discourse so acceptable to such as hate the church, and hope shortly to ruin it, we have their chief pretences already gathered to our hands, under very few heads, viz. the infirmity, the importunity, and plausible exceptions of our sectarists; concerning the first of which, the plea of infirmity or weakness, if it be meant of such a weakness (as it must be, if it argues any thing) as in the 14th chapter of the epistle to the Romans, or the 8th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul speaks of in those weak brethren, who in his time being newly converted from Judaism, or Gentilism, were for a while to be borne with in some things; it is most evident that the case of these converts then, and of our dissenters now, are so widely different, that where people have from their infancy been brought up in a Christian church, and by Christian parents and teachers, such infirmity or weakness the apostle there mentions in persons newly converted from other religions, neither is nor can be pleaded; since after so many opportunities of instruction, there can be no doubting or dissatisfaction in things necessary to be known, practised, or forborn, but what in all persons enjoying those means is very culpable, and in most inexcusable: so that the plea is impertinent.

And for that other, of importunity, it is to senseless, and withal so shameless a pretence, that it may be referred even to the judgment of those that make it, whether, in case this was admitted against things legally established, any laws in the world could possibly subsist or continue, where people were bold and violent enough to oppose and exclaim against them. And since the civil state has found it necessary to arm itself with laws against sturdy beggars, it is methinks somewhat hard, that in the ecclesiastical state, sturdy beggars should control the laws. In the last place, therefore, let us see what is to be ascribed to their phrase of "plausible exceptions," where it will concern us, first of all, to inquire into the force and meaning of this word *plausible*, this high and mighty word, to which the long received constitution of a whole church ought to give place. Now *plausible*, I conceive, may have one of these two significations.

1. It may be taken for that which carries with it more appearance and show of reason than its opposite, in the judgment or opinion of the multitude ; or,

2. For that which carries a greater appearance and show of reason in the judgment of the more sensible part of mankind. In either of these senses, I shall show that it makes nothing for them, and that from the following considerations.

1st. Because there is actually a church, a greater number of persons in the nation, that practise and conform to the use of those things now in debate between us, than there is of those who stand off and abstain from them. This being so, unless we will judge those men gross hypocrites, we are bound in reason and Christian charity to believe, that there appears to them a greater ground of reason, why they should so conform, than why they should not ; and consequently the first signification of plausibility fails our dissenters, since the number of those to whom conformity appears more rational, is much larger than the number of those to whom the exceptions against it appear to be so. In this sense therefore the exceptions cannot be allowed to be so much as plausible ; but then,

2dly. Admitting (which as they cannot prove, so neither do we grant) that there were this kind of plausibility in their exceptions brought against conformity, yet I deny that which is plausible in this sense, that it appears reasonable to the opinion and vogue of the multitude, ought to take place of that which is deemed to have greater reason for it in the sense and judgment of the more knowing, though much inferior to the other in number : which is the other sense in which I showed the word plausible may be taken.

3dly. The third consideration is, that since the governing part of the church and state have declared for conformity, by making laws to enjoin it ; and since in all governments the advantage of wisdom and knowledge in making or changing,

must in reason be presumed to be rather on the side of those that govern, than of those that are to be governed; it follows, that according to the other sense of plausibility, conformity and the reasons for it are more plausible, than the exceptions and arguments alleged against it.

4thly. The fourth and last consideration, which eradicates the foregoing pretence, is, that the ground of passing a thing into a law, and of retaining that law when once made, is not the plausibility of the thing or law to the sense of the vulgar, but the real conducibility of it to the good of the multitude; and that accords to the sense and judgment of those who are to govern and make laws for it. To which I add further, that a thing may be really and practically conducing to the good of the multitude, though neither suitable to the opinion or humour of it, and consequently noways plausible to it.

Now from these four consequences, it being manifest how insignificant that pretence, taken from the plausibility of the nonconformists' exceptions against the constitutions of our church, proves to be, since they are neither plausible, as proceeding from the wise and governing part of the nation, nor yet as from the greater or more numerous part of it; nor lastly, ought to have any control upon the laws, though they were never so plausible upon this last account; I shall pass from the plausibility to the force of the exceptions, and see whether we can meet with any strength of reason, where we have not yet found the show. And here I shall not pretend to recount them all in particular, but only take them as reducible to and derivable from the following three heads. 1. The unlawfulness, or, 2. The inexpediency, or, 3. And lastly, the smallness of the things excepted against. I shall only touch briefly upon each of them, for the compass of this discourse will allow no more.

1. For their leading plea of the unlawfulness of our ceremonies, grounded upon the old baffled argument drawn from the illegality of will-worship, and the prohibition of adding to and detracting from the word and worship of God: no other answer can or need be given to it, but that which has been given over and over. That our ceremonies are not esteemed by our church either as divine worship, or as any necessary essential part of it, but only as circumstances and external appurtenances for the more decent performance of the worship. For that man should of his own will impose on us any thing as the necessary worship of God, or add any thing to the worship as a necessary essential part of it, this questionless (as the aforementioned allegations sufficiently prove) must needs be sinful. But if from hence it be affirmed also, that no circumstance is to be allowed in divine worship, but what is declared and enjoined by express scripture; the consequence of this is so insufferably ridiculous, that it will extend to the making it unlawful for the church to appoint any

place or house for God's worship; nay, it will lead also to the very taking down of pulpits, reading-desks, fonts, and every thing else circumstantially ministering to the discharge of divine service, if not expressly mentioned and commanded in the word of God. And let them, upon the foregoing principle, avow the absurdity of the consequence if they can. But it has been well remarked, that these men do not indeed believe themselves, when they plead our rites unlawful. For when an act of parliament enjoined all persons in office to take the sacrament according to the use of the church of England (and that we know is to take it kneeling), we find none of them refusing (how idolatrous soever at other times they esteemed it) rather than turn out of the least office of gain they were possessed of; which, had it been unlawful, surely men of such tender consciences, as they own themselves to be, would never have been brought to do, since not the least unlawful thing ought to be committed for the greatest temporal advantage whatsoever. But since these men have by so many other instances manifested to the world, that they look upon their own will as their law, they would do well hereafter to allege no other argument for the unlawfulness of our ceremonies; and therefore to pass to their second plea of inexpediency, or inconveniency of them; to which I shall give the two following answers.

1st. That *inexpediency* being a word of a general, indefinite sense, and so determinable by the several fancies, humours, apprehensions, and interests of men about the same thing, so that what is judged expedient by one man is thought inexpedient by another; the judgment of the expediency or inexpediency of matters formed into laws, ought in all reason to rest wholly in the legislators and governors, and consequently no private persons ought to be looked upon as competent judges of the inexpediency of that which the legislative power has once enacted and established as expedient.

2dly. I affirm also, that that which is not only in itself lawful, but highly conducive to so great a concern of religion, as decency and order in divine worship; and this to that degree, that without it such order and decency could not subsist or continue; this cannot otherwise be inexpedient upon any considerable account whatsoever. But then all these considerations of inexpediency will be abundantly overbalanced by this one great expediency. For since the outward acts of divine worship cannot be performed, but with some circumstances and posture of body, either every man must be left to his own arbitration, or use what circumstances and postures he pleases, or a rule must be laid down to direct these things after one and the same manner. The former of necessity infers diversity and variety in the discharge of the same worship, and that by the same necessity infers disorder and indecency; which by nothing but a uniformity in the

behaviour and circumstances of persons joining in one and the same worship, can be prevented. This argument, I confess, concurs directly for the necessity of ceremonies in general about divine service; but so far as ours are argued against upon a general account, and till they are proved particularly unfit for the general end, the same may be also a defence of ours in particular.

3. Come we now to the third and last exception, grounded upon the smallness of the things excepted against; to which also my answer is twofold. First, that these things being in themselves lawful, and not only so, but also determined by sufficient authority, the smallness is so far from being a reason why men should refuse and stand out against the use of them, that it is an unanswerable argument why they should, without any demur, submit and comply with authority in matters which they themselves confess to be of no very great moment. For it ought to be a very great and weighty matter indeed, that can warrant a man in his disobedience to the injunctions of any lawful authority; and that which is a reason why men should comply with their governors, I am sure can be no reason why their governors should give place to them. But, secondly, I add further, that nothing actually enjoined by law is or ought to be looked upon as small or little, as to the use or forbearance of it, during the continuance of that law, nor yet as sufficient reason for the abrogation of that law; since, be the thing never so small in itself, yet being by great deliberation first established, and for a long time since received in the church, and contended for with real and great reason on its side; be the reasons never so plausible (which yet hitherto does not appear) on the other, yet the consequence of a change cannot be accounted small, since it is certainly very hazardous at best, and doubtful what mischief it may occasion, how far it may proceed, and where it may end; especially since the experience of all governments has made it evident, that there was hardly any thing altered in a settled state, that was not followed by more alterations, and several inconveniences attending these alterations; not indeed at first foreseen, but such as in the event made too great impressions on the public to be accounted either small or inconsiderable. These exceptions being therefore stripped of their plausibility and force too, and retorted upon the patrons of them, it follows, that notwithstanding all our harangues concerning our difference in smaller things, as the phrase now is, and our contending about shadows, and the like, made by some amongst us, who would fain be personally popular at the public cost, and build themselves a reputation with the rabble upon the ruins of the church, that by all the obligations of oaths and gratitude they are bound to support, as I am sure that supports them. It follows, I say, that for the governors of our church after all this to be ready to yield up the received constitutions of it, either to the infirmity, or impor-

tunity, or plausible exceptions (as their advocates are pleased to term them) of our clamorous dissenters, is so far from being a part either of the piety or prudence of those governors, that it is the fear of many both pious and prudent too, that in the end it will be like to prove no other than the permitting of a thief to come into the house, only to avoid the noise and trouble of his knocking at the door. And thus much for the first thing proposed; which was to consider and examine the pretences alleged by dissenters for our quitting or yielding up any of our ecclesiastical constitutions.

II. I come to show now the second thing, which is, *what are naturally like to be the consequences of such a tame resignation.* In order to which I shall consider these two things. 1. What the temper and dispositions of those men who press so much for compliances have usually been. 2. What the effects and consequences of such compliances or relaxations have been formerly.

1. And first for the temper of those men. This certainly should be considered; and if it ought to give any force to their demands, it ought to be extremely peaceable and impartial. But are there any qualities incident to the nature of man, that these persons are further from? For did they treat the governors of the church with any other appellation, but that of priests of Baal, idolaters, persecuting Nimrods, formalists, dumb dogs, proud popish prelates, haters of God and good men, &c.? I say, is not this their usual dialect? And can we imagine that the spirit of Christianity can suggest such language and expressions? Is it possible that where true religion governs in the heart, it should thus utter itself by the mouth? And to show yet further that this temper can manifest itself by actions as well as words, did not these who now plead conscience against law, persecute, plunder, kill, and murder those who pleaded and followed conscience according to law? And can any one assure the government that they will not under the same circumstances do again the same things? And for their impartiality, did they ever grant allowance or toleration to any that were dissenters from them? The presbyter would grant none, and so much has he given the world under his own hand, in those many clamorous libels, and that spawn of pamphlets composed on that subject. And when his younger brother, the more able and more successful sectarist of the two, had undermined him, and introduced toleration, yet still episcopacy as well as popery stood expressly excepted from any benefit by it, or part in it. This is the way and temper of the persons we have to deal with; and what pity is it that the whole government, both ecclesiastical and civil, should not lean to and bear with them! A faction that will be sure to requite such a favour once done them, by using it to the reproach and ruin of them that did it. And thus having given some short account of

the temper and disposition of these men, the next thing is to consider,

2. What the effect and consequences of such compliances or relaxations have been heretofore. And for this I appeal to the judgment, reading, and experience of all, who have in any measure applied themselves to the observation of men and things, whether they ever yet found that any who ever pressed for indulgences and forbearances, rested in them once granted, without proceeding any further? None ever yet did, but used them only as an act and instrument to get into power, and make every concession a step to a further demand; since every grant renders the person to whom it is made so much the more considerable, when he thinks fit to ask more. To grant is to give ground; and such persons ask some things only in order to their getting others without asking; for no other encroachers upon or enemies to any public constitution ask all at first; sedition itself is modest in the dawn, and only toleration may be petitioned, where nothing less than empire is designed. The nature of man acts the same way, whether in matters civil or ecclesiastical; and can we easily forget the methods by which that violent faction grew upon the throne? Did not the facility and too fatal mercy of a late prince embolden their impudence, instead of satisfying their desires? Was not every concession, every remission of his own right, so far from allaying the fury of their greedy appetites, that, like a breakfast, it rather called up their stomachs, and fitted them for a dinner? Did not craving still grow upon granting, till nothing remained to be asked on one side, or given on the other, but the life of the owner? Thus it was with the state; and I would fain hear any solid reason to prove that it will not happen alike to the church: for how has the papacy grown to that surprising height, and assumed such an extravagant power over sovereign princes, but by taking advantages from their own grants and favours to that see? Which still took occasion from them to raise herself gradually to further pretences, till courtesy quickly passed into claim, and what was gotten by petition, was held by prerogative; so that at length insolence, grown big and bold with success, knew no bounds, but trampled upon the necks of emperors, controlled the sceptre with the crosier, and in the face of the world openly avowed a superiority and preeminence over crowned heads. Thus grew the papacy, and by the same way will also grow other sects, for there is a papacy in every sect or faction, for they all design the same height and grandeur, though the pope alone has had the fortune to compass it. And thus having shown what have been the effects of such concessions heretofore, as well as described the temper of the persons who now press for them, I suppose it will not be very difficult for us to judge what are like to be the future effects and consequences of the same amongst ourselves; concerning which, I shall lay

down this assertion ; that what effects and consequences any thing had formerly, and what in its own nature it tends to, and is apt to produce, it is infinitely sottish and irrational to imagine or suppose that it will not produce and cause in the world for the future ; and, I believe, hardly any nation but ours would suffer the same cheat to be trumped upon it twice immediately together. Every society in the world subsists in the strength of certain laws, customs, and received usages uniting the several parts of it into one body. And accordingly the parting with any of these laws or customs is a real dissolution of the continuity, and consequently a partial destruction of the whole. It certainly shakes and weakens all the fabric, and weakness is but destruction begun ; it tends to it, and naturally ends in it ; as every disease of the body will be death, and no mischief cures itself. But to pass by arguments deduced from the general nature of things, to the same made evident to sense in particular instances, let us first of all suppose our dissenters to be dealt with upon terms of comprehension (as they call it), and taken into the communion of the church, without submitting to the present conditions of its communion, or any necessary obligation to obey the established rules of it, then these things must follow.

First, that men shall come into the national ministry full of their covenanting rebellious principles, even keen upon their spirits, and such as raised and carried on the late fatal war. Then will also follow, that in the same diocese, sometimes in the very same town, some shall use the surplice, and others not ; each shall have their parties prosecuting one another with the bitterest hatred and animosities ; some in the same church, and at the same time, shall receive the sacrament kneeling, some standing, and others probably sitting ; some shall make use of the cross in baptism, and others shall not only not use it themselves, but also inveigh and preach against those who do ; some shall preach this part, others that, and some none at all. And where, as in cathedrals, they cannot avoid the hearing of it read by others, they shall come into the church when it is done, and stepping into the pulpit, conceive a long, crude, extemporary prayer, in reproach of all those excellent ones just offered up before. Nay, in the same cathedral you shall see one prebend in a surplice, another in a long coat or tunic, and in performance of the service, some standing up at the creed, the doxology, or the reading of the gospel, others sitting, and perhaps laughing and winking upon their fellow schismatics in contempt of those who practise the decent order of the church : and from hence the mischief shall pass to the people, dividing them into parties and factions, so that some shall come to the assembly of the saints, only to hear a favourite preacher, and for ever after be sure to be absent. I will give no countenance, says one, to the formalist ; nor will I, says another, with much better reason, give ear to the schismatic :



all this while the church is rent in pieces, and the common enemy gratified. And these are some of the effects of comprehension; nor indeed could any other be expected from a project so nearly allied to fatal forty-one; so that I dare avow, that to bring in comprehension, is in plain terms, nothing less than to establish a schism in the church by law, and settle a plague in the bowels of it, that shall eat out the very heart and soul; so far consume the vitals and spirits of it, that in the compass of a very few years, it shall scarce have any visible being or subsistence, or so much as the face of a national church to show.

But from comprehension let us pass to toleration, that is, from a plague within the church, to a plague round about it. And is it possible for the church to continue sound, or indeed so much as to breathe, in either of these cases? Toleration is the very pulling up the flood-gates, and breaking open the fountains of the great deep, to pour in a deluge of wickedness, heresy, and blasphemy upon the church. The law of God commands men to profess and practise the Christian religion; the law of man in this case will bear you out, though of none, or of one of your own choice. Therefore, a hundred different religions at least shall, with a bare face and a high hand, bid defiance to the Christian; some of which, perhaps, shall deny the godhead of Christ, some the reality of his manhood, some the resurrection, and others the torments of hell. Some shall assert the eternity of the world, and the like, and all this by authentic allowance of law. Upon this footing it shall be safe for every broacher of new heresy to gain as many proselytes to it as he can; and there is none of them all, though never so absurd, impious, and blasphemous, but shall have proselytes and professors more or less; and what a large part of the nation must this necessarily draw in! So that as number and novelty easily run down truth and paucity for a while, the orthodox part of the nation, the church, will quickly be borne down, and swallowed up. And since it is impossible for government or society to subsist where there is no bond or cement of religion to hold it together, confusion must needs follow. And since it is equally impossible for confusion to last long, but that it must at last settle into something, that will and must be popery, infallibly, irresistibly; for the church of England being once extinct, no other sect or church has any bottom or foundation, or indeed any tolerable pretence to set up upon, but that. And that this deduction of things is neither inconsequent nor precarious, we may be assured from the papists themselves; for did not their late agent, who lost his life in their service, and whose letters are so well known, tell us in one of them, "that the way by which he intended to have popery brought in was by toleration; and that if an act for a general liberty of conscience could be obtained, it would give the greatest blow to the protestant religion here, that ever it received since its birth?"

Did he not also complain, "that all their disappointments, miseries, and hazards were owing to the fatal revocation (as he calls it) of the king's declaration for liberty of conscience?" And lastly, does he not affirm, "that all the advantage they expected to make, was by the help of the nonconformists, presbyterians, independents, and other sects?" I purposely use his own words; and shall we not think that the papists themselves knew what were the properest and most effectual means for the prosecution of their own interest? So that let all our separatists and dissenters know that they themselves are the pope's artificers, to carry on his work, and do that for him which he cannot do for himself. They are his harbingers and forerunners, to prepare and make plain a way for him to come amongst us. Thus they, even they, who are the most clamorous declaimers against popery, are the surest and most industrious factors for it. It is the weakening the church of England by their separation from it, and their invectives against it, which gives Rome a handle to attack it, thus weakened to her hands, with victory and success. The thief first breaks the hedge of the vineyard, to filch away perhaps but a few clusters, but the wild boar enters the same breach, and makes havoc of all.

As for the church of England, whatsoever fate may attend it, this may and must be said of it, that it is a church which claims no independent secular power, but, like a poor orphan, exposed naked and friendless to the world, pretends to no other help but the goodness of God, the piety of its principles, and the justice of its own cause to maintain it. A church not born into the world with teeth and talons like popery and presbytery, but like a lamb innocent, and defenceless, and silent, not only under the shearer, but under the butcher too; a church which, as it is obedient to the civil powers, without any treacherous distinctions or reverses, so would be glad to have the countenance and protection of that power; and though it cannot be protected by it, is yet resolved to be peaceable and quiet under it; and while it parts with all, to hold fast its integrity. And if God should for the nation's unworthy and ungrateful usage of so excellent a church, so pure, so peaceable a religion, bereave us of it, by letting in the tyranny and superstition of another, it is pity but it should come in its full force and power. And then I hope that such as have betrayed and enslaved their country, will consider that there is a temporal as well as ecclesiastical interest concerned in the case; that there are lands to be converted as well as heretics; and those who pretend they can with a word's speaking change the substance of some things, can with as much ease alter the properties of others. God's will be done in all things; but if popery ever comes in by English hands, we need not doubt but it will fully pay the score of those who bring it in.

III. I come now to the third and last thing proposed, which was to show *what influence and efficacy a strict adherence to the constitutions of the church, and an absolute refusal to part with any of them, is like to have upon the settlement of the church, and the purity of the gospel amongst us*; and for this I shall point out three ways by which it tends effectually to procure such a settlement.

1. By being the grand and most sovereign means to cause and preserve unity in the church. The psalmist mentions this as one of the noblest and greatest excellencies of the Jewish church, Psalm cxxii. 3, "that it was built as a city that is at unity in itself." Unity gives strength, and strength continuance. The catholics abroad frequently tell us, that if we could be united amongst ourselves, we should be a formidable church indeed; and for this reason there was none they so mortally hated, as the late renowned archbishop and martyr, whose whole endeavour was to establish a settled uniformity in all the British churches. For his zeal and activity in which glorious attempt, the presbyterians cut him off according to the papists' hearts' desire. Now a resolution to keep all the constitutions of the church, the parts of its society, and conditions of its communion entire, without lopping any of them, must needs unite all the ministers and members of it, while it engages them (as the apostle so passionately exhorts his Corinthians, 1 Cor. i. 10) to "speak all the same thing;" but if any one is indulged in the omission of the least thing enjoined, they cannot be said to "speak all the same thing." In which case, besides the deformity of the thing itself, that where the worship is the same, the manner of performing it should be so different; this difference of practice will also certainly produce an irreconcilable division of minds, since such diversity cannot be imagined to proceed from any other thing than an opinion that one man understands and does his duty after a better and more spiritual manner than another, and consequently has the start of his neighbour or fellow minister, either in point of judgment or devotion, in neither of which are men to allow precedency, especially when it comes once to be contested. Unity without uniformity, is like essence without existence, a mere word and a notion, and nowhere to be found in nature.

2. A strict adherence to the constitutions of the church is a direct way to settle it, by begetting in her enemies themselves an opinion of the goodness and requisiteness of those ways, for which they see the government and ministry of the church so concerned, that they can by no means be brought to recede from them. Let factious persons pretend what they will outwardly, yet they cannot but reason with themselves inwardly, that certainly there must be something more than ordinary in those things, that men of parts, reason, and good lives, so strenuously contend for, and so tenaciously adhere to. For it is not natural

to suppose that serious men will, or can be resolute for trifles, fight for straws, and encounter the fiercest opposition for such things, as all the interests of piety and religion may be equally provided for, whether the church retains or parts with them. This is unnatural and impious: and on the other side, let none think the people will have any reverence for that, for which the pastors of the church themselves show an indifference. And here let me mention a great, but sad truth, not so fit to be spoken as to be sighed out by every true son and lover of the church, that the wounds the church of England now bleeds by, she has received "in the house of her friends," her false, undermining friends; and that nonconformity, and a separation from it, and a contempt of the excellent constitution of it, have proceeded from nothing more, than from the partial, treacherous, half conformity of many of its own ministers; the surplice sometimes worn, and oftener laid aside; the liturgy so read, as if they were ashamed of it; the service so curtailed, as if the people were to have but the tenth of that for which they paid their own tenths; the ecclesiastical habit neglected, the sacrament indecently administered, the furniture of the altar abused, and the table of the Lord profaned. These and the like vile passages have made many nonconformists to the church, by their conformity to their minister. It was an observation of a judicious prelate, that of all the sorts of enemies that the church had, there were none so devilish and pernicious, and likely to prove so fatal to it, as the conforming puritan. It was a great truth, and not long after ratified by dreadful experience; for if you would know what the conforming puritan is, he is one that lives by the altar, and turns his back upon it; one that catches at the preferments of the church, but hates the discipline and orders of it; one that practises conformity as popery, takes oaths and tests with an inward abhorrence of what he does for the present, and a resolution to act quite contrary when occasion serves; one who during his conformity will be sure to be known by such a distinguishing badge as shall point him out to and secure his credit with the fanatical brotherhood; one that still declines reading the church service himself, leaving the work to curates and readers, thereby to keep up an advantageous interest with thriving, seditious tradesmen, and groaning, ignorant, but rich widows; one that in the midst of conformity thinks of a turn, and is careful to behave himself as not to outshoot his home, but to stand right and fair, in case a revolution should bring fanaticism again into fashion, which it is more than possible he secretly wishes for.

These and the like are the principles that act and govern the conforming puritan; who, in a word, is nothing else but ambition, avarice, and hypocrisy, serving all the real interests of schism and faction in the church's livery.

Now if there be any such here (as I hope there are none),

however he may sooth up and flatter himself, yet when he hears of such and such of his neighbours, parishioners, or acquaintance running to conventicles, such and such turned quakers, others fallen off to popery; and lastly, when the noise of the dreadful national disturbances and dangers shall ring about his ears, let him lay his hand upon his heart and say, "It is I, that by conforming by halves, and by treacherously prevaricating with my duty, so solemnly sworn to; I, that by bringing a contempt upon the service and order of the purest and best constituted church in the world, slabbering over the one, and slighting the other, have scandalized and tossed a stumbling-block before the neighbourhood, and have been the cause of this man's faction, that man's quakerism, the other's popery, and thereby have in my proportion contributed to those convulsions that now so terribly shake and threaten both church and state." I say, let him take his share of this horrid guilt, for God and man must lay it at his door; it is the genuine result of his actions; it is his own; and will stick faster and closer to him, than to be thrown off by him like his surplice.

3. And lastly, a strict adherence to the rules of the church, without yielding to any abatement in favour of the dissenters, is the way to settle and establish it, by possessing its enemies with an awful esteem of the conscience and courage of the governors and ministers of it. For if the things under debate be given up to the adversary, it must be upon one of these two accounts; either, first, that the persons who thus yield them up judge them unfit to be retained: or secondly, that they find themselves not able to retain them. One or both of these of necessity must be implied in such a yieldance.

In the first case then our dissenters will cry out, Where has been the conscience of our church governors for so many years, in imposing and insisting on those things which they themselves now acknowledge and confess not fit to be insisted upon? And is not this at once to own all the libellous charges and invectives which the nonconformists have been so long pursuing our church with? Is not this to fling dirt upon the government of it, ever since the Reformation? Nay, does not the same dirt fall upon the very reformers themselves, who first put our church into that order it is in at present, and died for it when they had done? Such therefore as are disposed to humour these dissenters, by giving up any of the constitutions of our church, should do well to consider what and how much is imported by such an act; and this they shall find to be no less than a tacit acknowledgment of the truth and justice of all those pleas by which our adversaries have been contending for such a cession all along. The truth is, it will do a great deal towards the removal of the charge of schism from their doors to ours, by representing the grounds of their separation from us, hitherto lawful at the least. For the

whole state of the matter between us lies in a very little compass; that either the church of England enjoins something unlawful as the condition of her communion, and then she is schismatical; or there is nothing unlawful enjoined by her, and then those that separate from her are schismatics: and till they prove that the church of England requires of such as communicate with her, either the belief of something false, or the practice of something impious, it is impossible to prove the unlawfulness of those things that she makes the condition of her communion, and consequently to free those that separate from the charge of schism.

Now while this is the persuasion of the governors of our church concerning these things, the world cannot but look upon them in their unmoveable adherence to them, as acting like men of conscience, and, which is next to it, like men of courage. The reputation of 'which two qualities in our bishops will do more to the daunting the church's enemies, than all their concessions can do to the reconciling of them. Courage awes an enemy, and backed with conscience, confounds him. He that has law on his side, and resolves not to yield, takes the directest way to be yielded to. For where an enemy sees resolution, he supposes strength; but to yield is to confess weakness, and consequently to embolden opposition. And I believe it will be one day found, that nothing has contributed more to make the dissenting nonconforming party considerable, than their being thought so. It has been our courting and treating with them, that has made them stand upon their own terms, instead of coming over to ours. And here I shall shut up this consideration with one remark, and it is about the council of Trent. The design of which council, in all the princes that were so earnest for the calling it, was to humble and reduce the power of the papacy; and great and fierce opposition was made against it all along by the prelates and ambassadors of those princes; but so far were they from prevailing, that the papacy weathered out the storm, and fixed itself deeper and stronger than ever it was before. But what method did it take thus to settle itself? Why, in a word, no other than a positive resolution not to yield or part with any thing; not to give way either to the importunity or plausible exceptions, nor, which is more, to the power of those princes. So that (as the writer of the history of the council observes) notwithstanding all those violent blusters and assaults made on every side against the papal power, yet in the end the patience and resolution of the legates overcame all.

Now what may we gather from hence? Why surely this very naturally; that if courage and resolution should be of such force to support a bad cause, it cannot be of less to maintain and carry on a good one; and if this could long prop up a rotten building, that had no foundation, why may it not only strengthen, but even perpetuate that which has so firm a one as the church of

England stands upon? And now to sum up all, could St. Paul find it necessary to take such a peremptory course with those erroneous dissenters in the church of Galatia, as "not to give place to them, no, not for an hour;" and is it not more necessary for us, where the pretences for schism are less plausible, and the persons perverted by it more numerous? Let us briefly lay together the reasons and arguments why we should deal with our dissenters, as St. Paul did with those, not to give them place at all, because,

1st. By our yielding or giving place to them, we have no rational ground to conclude we shall gain them, but rather encourage them to encroach upon us by further demands; since the experience of all governments has found concessions so far from quieting dissenters, that they have only animated them to greater and fiercer contentions.

2dly. By our yielding or giving place to them, we make the established laws (in which these men can neither prove injustice nor inexpedience) submit to them, who in duty, reason, and conscience; are bound to obey those laws.

3dly. By our yielding or giving place to them, we grant to those, who being themselves in power, never thought it reasonable to grant the same to others in the same case.

4thly. By our yielding or giving place to them, we bring a pernicious incurable evil into the church, if it be by a comprehension; or spread a fatal contagion round about it, if it be by toleration.

5thly. By our yielding to these men in a way of comprehension, we bring those into the church who once destroyed and pulled it down as unlawful and unchristian, and never yet renounced the principles by which they did so: nor (is it to be feared) ever will.

6thly. By such a comprehension we endeavour to satisfy those persons, who could never yet agree among themselves about any one thing or constitution in which they would all rest satisfied.

7thly. By indulging them this way, we act partially, in gratifying one sect, who can pretend to no favour, but what others may as justly claim who are not comprehended; and withal imprudently, in indulging one party, who will do us no good, to the exasperation of many more who have a greater power to do us hurt.

8thly. By such a concession we sacrifice the constitutions of our church to the will and humour of those whom the church has no need of, neither their abilities, parts, piety, or interest, nor any thing else belonging to them considered.

9thly. And lastly, by such a course we open the mouths of the Romish party against us; who will still be reproaching us for going from their church to a constitution that we ourselves now think fit to relinquish, by altering her discipline and the terms of her communion; and may justly ask us where, and in what kind of church or constitution, we intend finally to fix.

These, among many more, are the reasons why we contend, that our dissenters are not to be given place to.

But after all this, may it not be asked, whether it were not better to submit to the aforementioned inconveniences, rather than the church should be utterly ruined? To this I answer, that the case is fallaciously put, and supposes that if these things were submitted to, the church will not be ruined, which I deny; and upon the foregoing grounds affirm it to be much more probable that it will. To which I add, that of the two, it is much better that the church should be run down by a rude violence overpowering it, than to be given up by our own act and consent. For the first can only take away its revenues, and discourage or suppress the public exercise of its discipline, but cannot destroy its constitutions; the latter does. The former will be our calamity, but the latter, being the effect of our own consent, will render us inexcusable to all, both our friends and enemies, and ourselves too; and in the midst of our desolation leave us not so much as the conscience of a good cause to comfort us.

To explain which by instance: suppose the land overrun by a foreign invasion, yet still the body of the laws of England may be said to remain entire, though the execution of them be superseded; but if they be cancelled by act of parliament, they cease to be, or to be called any longer the laws of England. In like manner, if our church governors and the clergy concur not to the disannulling of the canons, rules, and orders of the church, the constitution of it will still remain, though the condition of it be obscured by persecution, and perhaps disabled from showing itself in a national body; just as it fared with it in the late rebellion: and who knows, but if force and rapine should again bring it into the same condition, the goodness of God may again give it the like resurrection? but if we surrender it up ourselves, to us it is dead, and past all recovery.

And therefore what remains now, but that we implore the continued protection of the Almighty upon a church, by such a miracle restored to us, and (all things considered) by as great a miracle preserved hitherto amongst us, that he would defeat its enemies, and increase its friends; and settle it upon such foundations of purity, peace, and order, that "the gates of hell may not prevail against it."



## SERMON XXXV.

## THE CERTAINTY OF A FUTURE JUDGMENT.

[Preached at St. Mary's, Oxon.]

2 CORINTHIANS v. 10.

*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

BESIDES instruction and exhortation, which have never been wanting (at least in this last age) to those of this church, there are but two ways or means more, in the ordinary course of divine providence, by which the reasonable creature is to be wrought upon ; I mean, by which man is either to be taken off from the forbidden evils he is inclined to, or drawn to the commanded good he is averse from : and those two are, the hope of a reward for one, and the fear of punishment for the other ; that those who have neither ingenuity nor gratitude, nor will be allured to piety and obedience by the fruition of God's mercies, may yet, out of a self-love at least, and impatience of suffering, be frighted from disobedience and profaneness by feeling of God's judgments. And truly, if we of this nation had been so ingenuous and well-natured a people as that the former of these (I mean God's mercies) would have prevailed with us, we had long since been inwardly the best, as we were outwardly the happiest, of all nations. For never was there any people since the creation of mankind, that enjoyed, for so long time together, so many of God's mercies of all kinds and degrees, and that with so many aggravating circumstances to improve and endear them to us, as we did, whilst, for almost a century together, God courted us, and wooed us, as it were, without interruption or intermission, by word and deed, by peace and plenty, and by all sorts both of temporal and spiritual expressions of his love, which were possible for a creator to make to a creature : so that what God said once to the church and nation of the Jews, he might have said unto us not long since, Isaiah v. 4, viz. "What could I have done more unto my vineyard ?" What could I have done more, in love and kindness to the church of England, than I have done ? Why should you be used kindly any more ? You will revolt more, you will but abuse my goodness, and weary my patience, and turn my grace into wantonness, as much or more hereafter than you have done already. And therefore God having, according to his usual method, first, and so long tried all

fair means to win us and keep us to him, and all in vain, most of us still growing the worse, the better we were used by him: he was compelled at last (after many warnings and threatenings to no purpose), he was compelled, I say, (for he delights not in the affliction of any creature,) to make use of his other, and that which is usually his most effectual way of working upon man, I mean the way of his judgments: and that, first, by taking away all his blessings, which we had so long and so unthankfully abused; and secondly, by making us feel, what we would not fear, the power and effects of his wrath, which we had before so often and so long provoked and despised; so that the measure of the afflictions we lately suffered, though it will still fall short of the measure of our sins, yet is it correspondent in many respects to the measure of that happiness we formerly enjoyed: our peace being turned into war, our plenty into scarcity, our health into sickness, our strength into weakness, our religion into hypocrisy on the one side, and profaneness on the other; and we ourselves, who before had nothing almost to wish for, had in those times nothing almost that we could hope for, being then the object of scorn or pity, who were before the object of envy and admiration to all our neighbouring kingdoms. And now one would believe the dismal account of those times, which our own sins brought upon us, should have some good effect on our lives and conversations; one would think, I say, that if our foreheads were not of brass, our necks iron, and our hearts adamant, we should either have bended or broken with these sufferings; and that the bitterness of our punishment would by this time have so far exceeded the sweetness of our sins, that we should willingly have quitted the one, upon condition we might have been (as certainly we should have been) delivered from the other. But alas! such is commonly either the blindness of our minds, the hardness of our hearts, or the searedness of our consciences, or rather the spiritual lethargy (as I may so term it) of our souls, that most of us sleep in as great security in the midst of all manner of judgments, as Jonas did in the midst of that storm which his own disobedience had raised. Or if perhaps we are awake with our eyes, yet our hearts as Nabal's was, are dead within us. So that to all our other miseries, this plague, which is the greatest any man can have in this world, is added also; I mean, "that seeing we should not see; and hearing, we should not hear; and understanding, we should not perceive;" nay, that even feeling, we should not feel, or at least not feel what most hurts us; or what indeed was, is, and will be the true and only cause of our sufferings. When it comes to pass, that very few of us are like David, the better, but many thousands of us, like Ahaz, the worse, since we were afflicted; having, like the ground, often drank up both "the former and latter rain;" the former of God's mercies, and the latter of his judgments:

and yet bring forth nothing but briers and thorns, nothing but hypocrisy and profaneness; and consequently must needs be (as the ground was) "nigh unto cursing," and I pray God our end be not burning. For to men so heavily plagued, and yet for all that so incorrigibly wicked, as many of us are, what remains but (as St. Paul tells us) "a fearful expectation of judgment?" And by *judgment* he means not any temporal or worldly judgment, but the conclusion, or rather consummation of all our miseries here, with hell and damnation itself hereafter. And indeed it is the fearful expectation of that future judgment, or nothing, that must work upon obstinate offenders. The truth is, our spiritual lethargy is not curable, but by a spiritual fever, and it must be the horror of an awakened and affrighted conscience, that must melt and mollify the hardness of our hearts. And therefore have I made choice of this argument to discourse on at this time, as being persuaded, that if any thing at all will humble us, it must be the apprehension of and meditation on the last judgment; and this I hope, by God's blessing, may be effectual, in some measure, to this purpose: for surely no man can be so fast asleep in his sins, but the sounding of the last trumpet in his ears may startle him; neither can any man be running so fast or so furiously in the broad way that leadeth to destruction, but the flashing of hell fire in his face may put him to a stand. And therefore let all profane persons or hypocrites, that live in any known sin or evil course of life, attend with fear and trembling to this most terrible, and yet most infallible oracle of the great God. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

These words I shall not now consider (as they may be) as matter of consolation to the righteous; but only, upon this occasion, handle them in the severer sense, or that of terror only; and from these words thus considered, I shall endeavour (waving all needless criticisms),

I. To convince every man's conscience, that there shall be indeed such an appearance, or such a general trial or doom of all mankind after this life, as is here spoken of.

II. I shall try to make clear to every one of our understandings, what manner of appearance, or trial, this shall be, as also before whom, and in what form of proceeding, together with the issue, effects, and consequences of it.

III. And lastly, I will, by way of application, do my best endeavour to work upon every man's affections, by showing you how much all men (of what quality and condition soever they are), especially the wicked and ungodly, are concerned in it; and consequently how much it imports all men, especially such men, to think upon it, and prepare for it, that by a timely repentance they may prevent the woful effects of it.

I. To begin then with the first of these general heads, in which I am to convince every man's conscience that there shall be indeed such an appearance, or such a general trial or doom of all mankind, after this life, as is here spoken of: neither let any man think this purpose unnecessary or superfluous, as if it supposed a doubt, where none was, by making a question of a principle; for though the affirmative of this proposition (viz. that there shall be certainly such a doom or judgment after this life) be, or ought to be, a principle undeniable, indisputable, and consequently unquestionable, amongst such as are truly Christians; yet because, as St. Paul says of the Jews, "all are not Jews that are Jews outwardly;" so may I say too, that all are not Christians neither, that are so outwardly; and because many pretend to be of the church that hardly believe all the articles of her creed; lastly, because there are some amongst us, that do not only live, but talk, as if they thought there were no account to be given of their sayings or doings after this life, or at least as if they either doubted or had forgotten this truth: for the satisfaction of all, it is therefore expedient to rescue from disbelief and contempt this fundamental article of our creed, viz. "that Christ shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead." For proof of this proposition against such as deny it, I desire only this fair *postulatum*, the acknowledgment of that truth, which is ordinarily acquirable by the light of nature herself, viz. that there is a God, or such a power as made us, and observes our actions; and granting this conclusion, I question not but to make it appear even to the most profane persons, and that from the dictates of their own reason, together with such notions as they have, or may have, of the Deity by the light of nature itself, that there shall be a trial or judgment of all men after this life, for the things that all and every one of them have done here in the flesh, and that,

1. Because it is very agreeable to the nature of God.
2. Because it is also very consonant to the nature of the soul of man.
3. Because it is necessary for the manifestation of the divine justice.
4. Because the inequality and disproportion between actions and events, merits and rewards, men's parts and their fortunes here in this life, doth seem to require and exact such a judgment.
5. Because there is an inbred notion, or natural instinct and apprehension in all men, that there will be such a judgment.

1. The truth of this doctrine is very applicable to the nature of God; for what can be more agreeable to the nature of the most pure and powerful agent, than to draw and unite unto itself whatsoever is like itself, as likewise to separate and remove from itself whatsoever is unlike itself? Now what is like God, but that which is good? and what unliker him than evil? And what is it

to unite the one to himself, but to reward? or to separate and remove the other, but to punish? And yet we see God neither rewards all the good, nor punishes all the wicked in this world; there must be therefore a time hereafter, when both the one and the other shall be performed, and that time is what I call the last judgment.

2. The truth of this doctrine is very agreeable to the nature of the soul of man, because otherwise the chief agent both in good and evil should have little or no reward for the one, and little or no punishment for the other. For the principal or chief agent in all our actions (whether they be good or bad) is the soul; the body is but an organized instrument, or at most but an accessory in either. And yet all rewards and punishments appointed for good and evil by laws in this life, are bodily and sensual, at least I am sure they are finite and mortal, and consequently no way suitable or proportionable to the spiritual, immaterial, and immortal nature of the soul. That therefore the chief agent or principal in all actions may have its reward or punishment proportionable and adequate to its own nature, it is necessary that at one time or other there should be an inquisition and judgment, whose effects, whether good or bad, may be spiritual and everlasting. Now if a judgment producing such effects cannot be here in this life, it must therefore necessarily be in another hereafter.

3. It is not only requisite, but necessary, that there should be a judgment after this life for the manifestation of the divine justice: for though whatsoever God doth is just, and that because God does it, yet does it not always appear to be so. Now God is not only just in himself, but will appear to be so to others, and will have his justice confessed and acknowledged, at one time or other, by the hearts and consciences of all men. And though the Creator is not obliged to account to the creature for the manner how, or the reason why, he doth any thing; yet if he will have the creature convinced of a thing, that it is so or so, he must needs some way or other, or at some time or other, make it appear to the creature that it is so; and therefore I say for this reason it is necessary, that at some time or other there should be a general, a public, and a formal trial, wherein the actions of every particular man should be discovered to all in general, both angels and men; that so the actions being compared with the issue, and the merit balanced with the reward, God might (as the apostle says, Rom. iii. 4) "be justified when he judgeth," whether he absolves or condemns, and that not only by those that stand by, and are but the hearers of it, but even by those themselves that are judged. One of the main ends therefore (as I humbly conceive) why God hath appointed a day to judge all the world (as the apostle speaks, Acts xvii. 31), is, to give the whole world satisfaction, or to convince men and angels, whether they be

good or bad, of the exact and precise integrity and impartiality of the divine justice in all and every one of the acts and effects of it. And hence it is, that this general doom is called in scripture, "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God;" or the day wherein God will reveal and make it appear that all his ways and all his judgments are righteous: though the very being of a God implies holiness and power, and consequently justice, yet the ways and means God makes use of to show that infinite justice are not always obvious; though we know by his nature it is impossible for him to be unjust, yet are there some things, in which, though we search ever so diligently for the manner how they come to pass; yet I am apt to believe them beyond the capacity of human nature, and the measure even of divine revelation on this side the grave; for example, that "for the offence of one, condemnation came upon all men," or that all men became liable to eternal wrath, because one man had eaten the forbidden fruit, is what we ought to deem exact truth, as consonant to express scripture; that the misery of all for the sin of one would be a most just punishment, if God should inflict it; but then we may believe likewise, that the reasons of God's justice in both these particulars are superior to the comprehension of mortality, and not now fathomable. The like may be said in regard of the punishment of finite and temporal sin with infinite and eternal torment; which though it be true, that it shall be so, and consequently just that it should be so; yet I believe it would perplex the wisest man living to give a satisfactory answer (according to our notions of equity and justice) how in equity or justice it can be so. And therefore in regard of these, and such other *δυσόλητα*, or hard truths as these are, it is, that St. Paul (though bred at the feet of Gamaliel, and rapt up into the third heaven, and consequently knowing as much or more of God than ever man did) cries out, as one overwhelmed in admiration and astonishment, Rom. xi. 33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" But at the day of judgment, the reason and equity even of these and of all other now seeming hard sayings, shall be disclosed to us, that the righteousness of all God's ways, and the impartiality of his dealings with the sons of men, may be so clearly manifested to all, that the very reprobates themselves shall be forced to see and acknowledge their own damnation to be most just, both in regard to the duration and intenseness of it, having not so much as the comfort of an excuse, nor any thing to accuse or complain of, but their own folly and fault for their destruction. And thus you see, in the third place, the necessity of a judgment after this life, for the satisfaction of the world, for the conviction of the wicked, and consequently for the full and perfect manifestation of the divine justice.

4. The strange disproportion and unsuitableness betwixt actions and events, merits and rewards, men's parts and their fortune here in this life, doth seem to exact, as it were, at the hands of a righteous God, that there should be a day of an after-reckoning, to rectify this, which is in appearance so great a disorder and confusion : and to put a real and a visible difference betwixt the evil and the good, the holy and the profane ; for now there seems to be none at all, it being long since the observation of one of the wisest of men, Eccles. ix. 2, that "all things happen alike unto all : there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked ; to the clean, and to the unclean : to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not ; as is the good, so is the sinner ; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath." Nay, it were well if it were no worse : but the same wise man tells us, Eccles. viii. 14, "that there be just men, to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked ; and there be wicked men, to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. For a just man," says he, Eccles. vii. 15, "many times perisheth in his righteousness, and a wicked man many times prolongs his life in his wickedness." The self-evident truth of these propositions cannot be questioned by any man (though they were not in holy writ) that sees and observes the dispensation of good and bad things in this life. To conclude ; we see that riches, honour, pleasure, and whatsoever the foolish world calls good, they are for the most part and in the greatest measure the portion of the worst of men : whereas poverty, pain, and shame, and whatever else we usually term evil, are for the most part and in the highest degree the lot of the righteous ; Dives being a type, as it were, of the one, and Lazarus of the other. There must therefore in all reason and equity, be another audit, or time of account after this life, to the end that, as Abraham said unto Dives, those that have received good things in this life, and been evil, may be tormented ; and those that have received evil things in this life, and been good, may be comforted ; "for if in this life only good men had hope in Christ, they were" (as the apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 19) "of all men most miserable." This argument drawn from the seeming unequal distribution of things here below, I mean the calamity of good men and the prosperity of bad men in this life, is urged by the elder Pliny, and some few others of the heathen moralists, to prove the non-existence of a God : for if, say they, there be a God, he must needs be just and good ; and if he be just and good, he would not, he could not suffer good men to be unrewarded, and evil men unpunished ; much less could he or would he endure, that evil men should thrive in and by their wicked courses, and good men fare the worse for their goodness, as in common experience we see they do. And truly if my conclusions concerning the certainty of a judgment to come after this life, were not true, this argument of theirs would shrewdly

shake the first article and foundation of all our creed, viz. the being of a God. But supposing such a judgment to come, wherein all good men shall finally and fully be rewarded, and all wicked men finally and fully punished, we do at once vindicate the power, the wisdom, the providence, the justice, and consequently the very being and essence of God, from all blasphemy and contradiction, notwithstanding any disproportion or incongruity whatever, that is or seems to be between actions and events, merits and rewards, men's parts and their fortunes, here in this life. And this is the fourth reason, why, granting there is a God, we must necessarily grant likewise, that there shall be a day of judgment.

5. The last reason I shall make use of, to necessitate the evidence and enforce the truth of the doctrine of a future judgment, is that inborn and inbred notion and apprehension, which all men have by nature, that there is such a thing, together with the general expectation of all men, that there will be such a thing: and this reason, how slight soever it may appear to others, to me it seems (what I hope I shall make it seem to you also) most effectual and convincing; for whatsoever it is that all men think will be, without doubt it shall be, because whatsoever all men agree in, is the voice of nature itself, and consequently must be true: for the dictates of nature are stronger than the probats of reason, I mean of reason not abstracted, but as it is in us mortals; and therefore of all other arguments, that which is drawn from natural impression and instinct is most forcible and concluding, and the knowledge arising from such impression or instinct, though it be not so full and perfect, yet it is more certain and infallible than any other knowledge whatsoever, arising from a man's own fallible discourse and reasoning. I confess indeed that knowledge, the produce of instinct and natural impression only, is not so full, so perfect, nor perhaps so properly termed knowledge (because the word *scire* properly denotes *per causas scire*), as that which is concluded by demonstration, or drawn from an evident connexion of one thing with another, or a consequence of one thing from another; because when a man knows any thing by natural impression or instinct only, he knows not the reasons of what he knows; he knows *οτι εστι*, that there is such a thing, but not *διοτι εστι*, why it is; no, nor perhaps *τι εστι*, what it is; I mean not what it is in the exact or distinct nature of it neither; and yet for all that, this knowledge is (as far as it reaches) more certain and infallible than any conclusion drawn from our own reasoning and discourse can be. 1st. Because this inbred notion or this knowledge which we have of any thing by natural impression or instinct, is not (as all other human or acquired knowledge is) a conclusion made by us from our own discourse and judgment, which is always fallible or subject unto error: but it is a conclusion made in us by nature, or rather by the God of



nature himself, who can neither deceive nor be deceived; and therefore whatsoever we know in this manner must needs be certain.

2dly. Because, if the knowledge we have by our instinct were not certain or infallible, this received and as yet undoubted maxim, both in natural philosophy and divinity, viz. that God and nature do nothing in vain, would not be true: for if that were not so indeed, which all men in general, and every man in particular is naturally inclined to believe to be so; then that natural impression or instinct, whereby they are inclined to think so, should be planted in them to no purpose; the affirmation of which is not only a reproach to nature, but a blasphemy against God himself; because indeed that which we call nature is but God's ordinary method of working in and by the creature.

3dly. That the knowledge which is an effect of natural impression or instinct is indeed certain and infallible, will easily and clearly appear, if we but consider those creatures who have not the use of reason, or of instruction, of revelation, of tradition, or of any other means of knowledge (excepting that of *sense*), but this of instinct or natural impression only; and yet we see, that those irrational creatures have their knowledge more immediately, more certainly, and more infallibly, than any man's deductions from his own discourse and reason. For instance, who amongst us is there that doth or can know his enemy (after the clearest discovery he can make of him) so certainly, or avoid him so suddenly, as the lark doth the hobby at the first sight? What sick man, nay, what physician knows his own disease, and the remedy for it, so exactly, as the dog knows his vomit, and that which will procure it? What husbandman knows his seasons more exactly, or observes them more duly or punctually, than the stork, the crane, and the swallow? Lastly, (pardon the lowness of the similitude) what landlord or what tenant foresees the ruin of his own house so certainly, or avoids it so seasonably, as the vermin his inmates? and yet the lark never studied Machiavel, nor the dog Hippocrates, neither were the stork, the crane, or the swallow, ever taught by natural philosophy to distinguish seasons; nor the vermin by judicial astrology to foresee casual and contingent events: but it has pleased the all-wise and gracious Creator to supply the defects of reason in these poor helpless animals, with a knowledge which, though it be not so large and perfect, yet it is more certain and infallible, especially in those things that are necessary for the preservation of their existence and species, than any knowledge attainable by men, by disquisition or speculation, because (as I said before) it is a knowledge not gotten by, but infused in them by God and nature, who cannot err; and such a knowledge as this (I mean for the kind of it) is that which all men have of a judgment to come, or of something to be suffered by evil doers

after this life; a knowledge, I say, which is planted in them, and not learned by them, but originally in every man, and universally in all men; and whatsoever is so, must needs be taught them by God and nature, and consequently cannot be erroneous or uncertain. It is true indeed, that some particular men, or some particular sort or sect of men, may believe and maintain false and foolish opinions, such as have neither solidity of truth in them, nor reality of object without them: but then such opinions as these had their creation and production at first from some one man's fancy, and from thence derived by education and tradition, may afterwards infect many: and thus the opinion and practice of idolatry, or the worship of more gods than one, came into the world, and spread itself over most part of mankind, for it was not so from the beginning. But the dictates and impressions of nature do very much differ from conceits or imaginations of fancy, and from traditional errors of custom and education; in the first place, because the dictates and impressions of nature are not only general in most men, but universal in all men, whereas conceits of fancy, and traditional errors of custom or education, flowing from thence, though they may be, and often are consented to and believed by many, yet none of them ever were or ever will be consented to and believed by all. Thus were the philosophers of old, and thus are the Christians at this day, divided into their several sects and heresies.

Secondly, The dictates and impressions of nature, as they are universally in all men, so are they originally in every man without teaching. And hence it is that St. Paul tells us, Rom. ii. 14, that "the gentiles that had not the law" (he means that were never taught the law as the Jews were) had yet notwithstanding that very law in regard to the fundamental notions of piety, justice, and sobriety, written in all and every one of their hearts by nature itself, and together with the law, by necessary consequence, a belief and expectation of a reward for good and punishment for evil after this life; as appears by their "consciences accusing and excusing them," even for those things which were not punishable or rewardable, nor perhaps discernible by any but themselves here in this world. Whence it follows, that those notions of law and suggestions of conscience (which St. Paul tells us were in all the gentiles without teaching) must needs be dictates and impressions of a simple and uncorrupted nature.

Thirdly. The dictates and impressions of nature (*in quantum et quatenus*), or as far as they are merely from nature, receive neither addition nor diminution (as they may do either) from other principles: as they are universally in all men without exception, and originally in every man without instruction, so are they equally and alike in all men without distinction, in the Gentile as well as in the Jew, in the barbarian as well as in the

Greek, in the Pagan as well as in the Christian, and in those that have no learning as well as in those that have; whereas opinion, arising from conceit of fancy, and knowledge, which is the product of human reason, and faith itself, which is an effect of and assent to divine revelation, are all of them stronger or weaker, more or less in their several subjects, according to the strength, measure, and working of the several principles from whence they flow. And consequently they are none of them equal in all men, nor any one of them equally at all times in those that have them: but the other natural, impressive knowledge is quite contrary; such a knowledge as this is that apprehension which all men have or would have (if their natural impressions were not defaced in them) of a judgment to come, or of a reward for the good and a punishment for the wicked after this life; for never was there any good man but hoped for it, or any wicked man but at some time or other was afraid of it. In a word, there was never in any age in the world, either nation in general, or any one man in particular, that owned the being of a God, but he acknowledged a judgment to come also; although the notion they perhaps had of it was but in a confused and imperfect manner; as appears by those Elysian fields, or places of rest and happiness for the good, and Phlegethon and Cocytus, those black and burning lakes of fire and brimstone, the places of torment for the wicked after this life; which the poets or heathen divines speak of, as the general and received opinion of all mankind, together with Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Æacus, which were to be the judges; Alecto, Megæra, and Tisiphone, the fiends or furies which were to be the tormentors of the damned.

This, I say, was the general and the constant doctrine and opinion of the heathen; which was registered, but not invented by the poets; being indeed in substance the same which we Christians are now taught more perfectly by divine revelation, but was always instilled by nature itself, though more obscurely and imperfectly, into all mankind. Nay those very men themselves, who both by their words and actions would make others believe that they believed no God, do many times shake and tremble upon the apprehension and expectation of some terrible thing or other that is to come; so that whilst they deny a judge with their mouths, they acknowledge a judgment in their hearts. And indeed bad men are not always so bold as they would seem to be, nor so little afraid of God as they would have the world think they are. For of all men, these atheists, that would be, whenever they are in any great extremity or danger, have the poorest, the basest, and the most dejected spirits. Give me a man of the coldest and softest constitution, and let him be but innocent, and he shall look death (I mean a present, an evident, a deliberate, and an unavoidable death) with more courage and bravery in the

face, than a man of the most fiery temper and most exalted spirit, if he be a villain, or guilty of any horrid or heinous crime. And what is or can be the reason of this, but that one is secure, and the other is afraid of some terrible thing after death, which can be no other but that general doom or judgment we now speak of, the harbinger or forerunner whereof hath taken up his lodging in the breasts and bosoms of all men? And that is conscience, which hath always (unless it be asleep, or "seared" as St. Paul calls it, "with a hot iron") one of its eyes upon sin here, and the other upon punishment hereafter; which whosoever tells me he does not believe, he must pardon me if I tell him again, that I do not believe him; for it is impossible that those inborn characters, that hand-writing of God and nature, I mean that innate impression or instinct which all men have of a future reward or punishment, should be utterly blotted out of any man; forgotten perhaps, or not thought upon, or defaced it may be, but absolutely lost and annihilated it cannot be; and therefore if there be any man afraid or loath to own this truth, he betrays a secret belief of it by his fears; or if he do not now, he will do so at some time or other hereafter.

But against this which has been said, it may be objected, that if the belief of a judgment to come were, as I affirm it to be, an effect of natural impression or instinct, then it would be universally equal in all, and consequently equal in every one of the same kind; for we see, say they, that all larks are equally afraid of the hobby, and every particular lark as much at one time as at another. Besides, it is apparent, that all men do not equally believe this truth; nay, it is to be feared, that some men do not believe it at all; and of those who do, some believe it at one time more, and less at another. And therefore that this belief of a judgment to come (in whomsoever it is) is the effect of some other cause, and not of natural impression or instinct.

To this objection I answer, that it is true indeed, that all inbred and inborn impressions or instincts are universally and constantly equal in all particulars of the same kind; and always continue to be so in those creatures which are not capable of either infection from without, or corruption from within. And such are all living creatures besides man; which neither sway the rule of nature, nor are swerved from it, but are always constantly and equally guided by it, as having no other principle from without to corrupt or control it. But with men it is far otherwise; for in them those notions of nature that are born with them may and do receive augmentation or diminution, alteration or corruption from some other principles either without us or within us. For instance, those inborn notions that there is a God, that there will be a reward for those that live well, and punishment for those that live ill; and that we should do unto others as we would have others do unto us, and the like, may and do receive aug-

mentation from divine revelation, and from right reason, and from a good (either religious or moral) education and conversation; so that what was imprinted in us by nature may be and is improved and confirmed in us by other principles; and therefore I will not deny, but a Christian may have a more constant, and more confirmed, and more perfect knowledge both of a God and of a judgment to come, and of that fundamental equity which ought to be betwixt one man and another, than he that hath no knowledge of these and the like things, but by the light of nature only. And by the same reason one Christian may have a more constant, distinct, and perfect knowledge of the same truths than another Christian, according as the one may be more or less enlightened by those higher principles than the other, or may make a better or a worse use of them.

Again: as the knowledge we have by instinct may be augmented and improved, confirmed and perfected; so it may be lessened and weakened, defaced and corrupted; nay, and for a time so obscured, as it may seem both to ourselves and others to be quite extinguished, and that either by our own depraved reason, together with our perverse will and affections from within us, or by an evil education, or a worse conversation from without us, which many times infuse such opinions (both concerning God and ourselves) into us, as are quite contrary to and destructive of our first notions; and yet because they are more suitable to our perverse will and affections, they are frequently received and defended by our depraved reason against the light of nature itself. As a man may easily perceive, that will but read attentively the first and second chapters of St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, where the apostle having laid it down for an undoubted conclusion, that the law (he means the moral law), or the fundamental notions of our duty towards God and man, was written by nature in the heart of all the gentiles, and has proved it to be so, because their consciences did justify them when they did well, and accuse them when they did ill; yet he affirms likewise, that this very law (though written in their hearts by nature) was so obscured and almost quite erased from their judgment by their more perverse wills and affections, that as they worshipped beasts for God, so they made beasts of themselves, and behaved themselves worse than beasts to one another. This behaviour does no way invalidate the forcibleness of this argument, but rather intimates a deep stupefaction, by a long inveterate habit of ill, fallen on their minds. So that, to conclude this point, there may be and is a natural knowledge in all men of a future judgment, as well as the existence of a God; though in some perhaps the impression of either of these truths is not always active or operative; for we see that some men are grown to such a habit of sensuality, or brutality, that they do nothing almost according to reason; and yet I hope that no man will from thence con-

clude, that such men are not reasonable creatures, or that they have no such natural principle or faculty as reason at all in them. And let this suffice for our conviction in point of judgment or conscience, that there shall be a day of judgment after this life : which was my first general.

II. I am therefore now, in the second place, to inquire (as far as the light of divine revelation will enable me) *what manner of thing this judgment or last doom will be.* Know then, that the great appearance, trial, or judgment which my text speaks of, is the general or grand assize of the whole world, held in a heavenly high court of justice by our Saviour, to hear, examine, and finally determine, of all thoughts, words, and actions, that ever were thought, spoken, or committed, together with the causes, occasions, circumstances, and consequences of all and every one of them, and accordingly to pronounce an irrevocable sentence either of absolution or condemnation upon all men. In which solemn description you have,

1. The Judge.
2. The parties to be judged.
3. The things controverted, or for what they shall be judged.
4. The form of this trial, or the manner of proceeding that shall be held in it.
5. And lastly, the sentence itself, with the issue and execution of it.

1. First, then, for the judge at this general and grand assize ; he must, as my text tells you, be Christ ; “ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ ; ” God and man, in his two capacities of godhead and manhood connected ; for as he was our Redeemer, so he is to be our judge in both his natures : he must in the first place be our judge as he is God, because none but God has jurisdiction over all the parties that are to be tried at that judgment, which are angels as well as men, princes as well as subjects, and the greatest peers as well as the meanest peasants. Now though one creature may have jurisdiction over another, nay over many other creatures, yet no one has or can have authority over all his fellows, this being a royalty or prerogative of the Creator himself only. Again : Christ must be judge, as he is God, because none but omniscience can discern the main and principal things that shall be there called in question, which are not words and actions only, but the hearts, consciences, thoughts, purposes, and intentions of all men. Lastly : Christ must be judge, as he is God, because none but God can give life and execution to the sentence as pronounced then, whether of absolution or condemnation ; for none else can render the creature infinitely and eternally happy, which is the execution of one of the sentences ; or on the other side, render the other part of the sentence of infinite and everlasting misery effectual, but God

only: and therefore the judge at that trial must necessarily be God, and consequently this very act or office of Christ, the execution of justice in this judgment, is an irrefragable argument of his godhead. But though God only is or can be our judge at that great tribunal, yet nevertheless he must not be God only, but man likewise; and that, first, in regard of the judgment itself, to manifest the equity, the indiscriminateness, and the impartiality of it; which might be perhaps doubted of, if the judge were either God or man only. For if he were only God, he would be the party offended, and if only man, the person offending: and a judgment, though really never so just, may be, or seem to be, suspected to be otherwise, when either of the parties concerned is judge; whereas Christ, being God as well as man, and man as well as God, must needs be acknowledged to be an equal, an indifferent, and impartial judge betwixt God and man, as being equally allied unto them both. Again: Christ must be judge as he is man, in regard to the parties triable at that day, whether they be sheep or goats; I mean, whether they be the just that are to be absolved, or the wicked that are to be condemned. For among the just there is none so good, but he might fairly be afraid to appear at that judgment, if the same person were not our Saviour who is to be our judge, who if he brought not to the bench with him the pity and compassion of a man, as well as the power and justice of a God; nay, if God at that trial did not look upon us through himself as man, and beholding the merits in his own person, impute them to us, not one of all mankind could be saved. He is to be judge as man therefore, that the just to be absolved may not fear to appear before him: and he must be judge as man too, that the condemned wicked may have no cause of complaint, how severe usage soever they find from him. For how can even the damned themselves murmur, repine, or except against the judgment, where the trial (as I shall show you presently) is by the evidence of their own conscience, and their condemnation pronounced by that judge, who laid down his life to save sinners, and consequently cannot possibly be imagined to condemn any but such as would not be saved by him. Lastly: Christ must be judge, as he is man, in regard of all mankind, or in regard of humanity itself; I mean for the dignifying and exalting of human nature: that as the nature of man was debased, and brought down to the lowest degree of meanness in the person of our Saviour, in his birth, life, and at his death; so the same nature, in the same person, might be exalted and raised up to so high a degree of power, majesty, and honour, that not only men that had despised him, and devils that had tempted him, but even the blessed and glorious angels themselves, whose comfort and assistance he once stood in need of, should fall down, and tremble at his presence. And thus much for the judge at this awful trial.

2. The second thing considerable in the description I gave you of this judgment, are the parties to be judged; and those briefly (to speak nothing of the evil angels who are then also to receive their full and final doom) are all persons of all sorts, qualities, conditions, and professions, young and old, rich and poor, high and low, one with another. For at this bar princes have no prerogatives, the nobles have no privileges, nor the clergy exemptions and immunities, nor the lawyer any more favour than his client; the rich shall neither be regarded for their bags, or the poor pitied for his poverty: but all indifferently shall have the same judge and the same trial, the same evidence and the same witness; and if their cases be alike (how different soever their persons or estates may be here), their fate shall there be the same. And thus much for the parties to be judged.

3. The next thing is, the matters that shall be questioned at that trial; and those are not our actions only, but our words also, and not only our words, but our thoughts too, and not only our thoughts, but our very inclinations or dispositions themselves likewise; together with the place, time, occasion, intention, and end, for which every thing was done, thought, or spoken, and that from the first birth or instant of time, to the very last periodical minute of it.

4. And then for the manner of proceeding, there will be no occasion for examination of witnesses, or reading depositions; there will be no *allegata* or *probata*; for every man shall be indicted and arraigned, cast or acquitted, condemned or absolved, by the testimony of his own conscience, which shall readily, though never so unwillingly, assent to whatever the judge shall charge it with, whether it be good or evil; whether it be for him or against him. The book of life shall be opened, wherein is registered and recorded whatever good or evil at any time, from the beginning of the world till the end of it, has been done, spoken, consented to, or imagined by any or all mankind; and what is more wonderful, this is written in such a character, that all men (of what nation or language soever) must needs understand and acknowledge the truth of it; this book being nothing else but the counterpart, as it were, of every man's conscience, which God keeps by him as an undeniable evidence to convince all men with at the last judgment. In which,

5. I shall now consider the fifth and last thing proposed to this description, viz. the sentence itself, whether of absolution or condemnation, the form of both which is judicially set down by Christ himself, Matt. xxv. 34. That of absolution in these terms, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" but of this sentence the present occasion of our humiliation will not permit me to speak, as too triumphant a topic for this day. That other sentence therefore (the sad but seasonable object of our present



(~~in~~ citation) you may find in the 41st verse of the same chapter, in these words, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." A dismal and woful sentence, my beloved, a sentence carrying hell and horror in the very sound of it; whilst every syllable does, as it were, stab the soul, and every word bring with it a new death (if I may so say without a paradox) to those that can never die. Have we any of us ever been present when the sentence but of a bodily death has been pronounced upon a prisoner at the bar? and may not we observe what horror and amazement does instantly seize the poor wretch, what a deadly paleness covers his face, what a ghastly distraction rises in his countenance, what a faltering in his speech, what a trembling in his joints, what a cold sweat over his whole body? and yet all these were but weak and faint expressions of what his soul suffered. If any of us, who have seen and observed all this, had but once felt in ourselves what we have seen in others; then perhaps we might guess, and yet but guess, at the fear and trembling, the horror and amazement, which will not only seize and lay hold upon, but devour and swallow up the soul of man, upon the hearing of that dreadful knell, that direful and fatal sentence, which will at once both pronounce, and make him unspeakably, unconceivably, irrecoverably, and everlastingly miserable. But why do I compare things together so infinitely disproportionate, as temporal with eternal, corporeal with spiritual, the death of the body alone, with the death of soul and body too, or the benches of men with the tribunal of God? No, my beloved, if the sentence of that judge were like those of ours here, it would be well for the greatest part of mankind; for then perhaps it might either be appealed from, or reversed; or if neither, yet at worst it might be endured, without their being utterly and for ever undone by it. Here on earth, perhaps, appeals may be lodged, and carried from one place to another, from an inferior to a superior authority. But at the last day, to whom shall we appeal from God our sovereign and supreme judge? Or what higher court of judicature is there than that of heaven?

Lastly: when our advocate himself condemns us, who will be so compassionate, or dare be so impudent as to plead for us? When, therefore, this sentence is once pronounced, there is no more hope left either of reprieve or pardon, of ease or intermission, of alteration or ending: but (which is the misery of miseries) that torment which is intolerable for a moment, must last for ever: a word that must vex and rack the understanding, puzzle and weary the imagination, distract and confound all the powers and faculties of the soul. What pain is there or can there be so little, as man could be content on any consideration to endure for ever? What man amongst us is there so poor or so covetous, as that he would be hired, or so stout or so patient

(if he were hired), that he could endure but the aching of ~~one~~ tooth in extremity, if he hoped for no end of his pain? And yet the toothache, the gout, the stone, and the strangury, the rack and the wheel, with the rest of our natural diseases or inventions of cruel ingenuity, are but as so many flea-bitings, or inconsiderable trifles, compared with the torments of the damned. All pains here are either tolerable or not durable, either we may suffer them, or at least shall sink under them. But there, there I say, in hell is acuteness of sense with acuteness of torment, extremity of pain and extremity of feeling, insupportable anguish, and yet ability to bear it, where the fire always burns, and yet consumes not, where fuel is still devoured, and yet it wastes not; where, if a man had a world of earth, he would give it all for one drop of water, and yet the whole ocean would not cool him; where there is perpetual darkness, without rest, continual night void of sleep: and (to conclude what never shall be concluded indeed) where is always distraction without madness, dying without death, misery without pity, and wishing without hope. Such things as these can hardly be thought of, much less dwelt on without the greatest horror. If St. Paul, a prisoner at the bar, discoursing on this argument, could make an insulting Felix tremble; how much greater fear ought they to have, who, living in any known breach of God's commands, or open sin unrepented of, are therefore much more concerned in that future judgment than Felix could be! He, you know, was a heathen, but we are Christians; and you may be assured the least Christian sinner is greater than the greatest among the heathens; because they can sin but against the light of nature, and their own reason only; whereas wicked Christians sin not only against the light of nature and reason, but against divine revelation in the known precepts of the law, and those plainer ones of the gospel also; at once most desperately slighting the terrible threats of the one, and most profanely despising the gracious offers of the other. So that if the honour either of God's mercy or of his justice be dear unto him, it must necessarily be easier, not only for Felix, that never heard of Christ, but even for Pontius Pilate himself, who condemned him, than it will be for any wicked, impenitent Christian at the day of judgment.

III. And therefore, for *application of all unto ourselves*, let us now (according to my third and last general) endeavour to be informed how far we ourselves are like to be concerned in the future judgment, taken (as I have taken it all this while) in the worst sense, and consequently how we ought to think of and prepare for it. Well then, if there be indeed such a judgment to come, as I hope I have fairly proved, we may from thence conclude,

1. That the greatest pretenders to wisdom in this world are

not the wisest men; I mean those great Ahithophels, those subtle steersmen of states and kingdoms, those deep politicians, and civil oracles, as it were, of courts and councils, who think this doctrine of a future judgment, as well as most of the other mysteries of the Christian religion, to be indeed nothing else but reasons of state, or the politic devices and inventions of the wiser sort of men (they mean such as they themselves are), to keep the weaker judgments and stronger passions in the greatest awe, and so to make them the more pliable and conformable to the laws and commands of men. So that the end of all religion is (as these political Christians suppose) terminated in this life; and that whatsoever foolish book-worms may talk of after this life, whether it be the resurrection of the body, or the appearance of both body and soul in another place, with the eternal existence of them both in extremity either of pain or pleasure, with whatsoever else our Christian faith obliges us to believe, in order to another life, they are but so many bugbears to fright children withal. Or at best, in those men's opinion, they are but the vain speculations of idle and curious wits, or the issue and product of melancholy brains, and fitter for the exercise of men's disputative faculties in the schools, than for the object of a wise man's hopes or fears in any of his actions, as having indeed nothing of solid truth or reality in them. But how miserably mistaken and shamefully deceived will these giant-wits, these mighty Solomons (as they are now thought) then find themselves to be, when, awakened by the sudden, the general, and fearful alarm of the last trumpet, out of that sleep which they well hoped would have been endless, they shall see themselves (to their inexpressible horror and amazement) first summoned and haled to judgment, and afterwards hurried and dragged away by stranger and subtler spirits than themselves, to torment and execution; where their senses will quickly convince their intellects, that what they formerly supposed but a chimera, an idle speculation, or at best but a politic invention, is indeed a sad, a serious, and severe truth. Neither will it be the least part of these men's hell, that they shall eternally reproach themselves with folly, after so exalted an opinion of their own wisdom.

2. To proceed, again, in the second place; all other hypocrites, as well as atheistical statesmen, are fools also; I say all other hypocrites, because indeed these Christian politicians, or politic Christians I just now mentioned, are a sort of hypocrites, viz. moral or civil hypocrites (as I may so call them), because they seem to believe what they do not, and enjoin others what they care not for themselves; I mean the belief of Christian doctrines and duties, and that for a moral and civil respect or end only, to wit, in order to the preservation of public peace and welfare in the state; which certainly were a very good end, if it were not their only end in so doing. But the other hypocrites I now speak of

are religious hypocrites, and not so called because they are more religious than the other, but because they are such hypocrites as to pretend religion for their main end, though indeed they intend and use it only as a means to advance and compass, not the public, but their own particular designs by it (whether they be honest or dishonest), and that often to the prejudice of the public interest both of church and state; nay sometimes, as in our late intestine broils, to the apparent ruin or hazard of them both. And therefore this kind of hypocrites, as they are much more wicked and mischievous here in this world; so (supposing a future reckoning) they will be far more miserable in another state, than those hypocrites or atheists lately mentioned. Indeed, if God was as easily to be deceived as men are, with false, specious shows and pretences; or if these hypocrites could hope to work upon God, as they once did upon the populace, by false words and flattering insinuations; or lastly, if they could make God (as they would fain have made the king) believe, that the demolishing of his palaces, the robbing him of his revenues, the persecuting of his ministers, by their false interpreting and misapplying of his word, nay, and by driving himself (as much as in them lies) out of his own kingdom, the church; if they can, I say, when they come to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, make him believe that these and all other things they have done of the like kind, were all of them done in order to his service, and with an intention to make him a much more glorious God than he was before; then let them be thought as wise as they would seem religious: nay, let them name their own places and preferments in heaven, as they did here on earth in the time of their usurpation; for certainly no preferment can hardly be adequate to such transcendent spirits and undertakings.

And yet all this would be no difficult matter for them to bring to pass; if either, in the first place, they might always be owned as the highest and supreme judicatory; that is, if they might be hereafter, as they will needs be here, their own judges; or secondly, if they may not be their own judges, or absolved by their own votes, yet if they might at least be but tried (as they think it very equitable they should be) by their own ordinances, that is, by laws and rules of their own composure, without and contrary to the consent of the supreme legislator: or lastly, if at that great assize they can neither be their own judges, nor be tried by their own ordinances, yet at least if they may but have their own preachers or advocates (who pleaded so powerfully for them to the people) to plead for them likewise before God; and withal, if those advocates of theirs may but be allowed to interpret that sentence which shall then be pronounced, with the same assurance and falsity as they have interpreted others of holy writ; neither they themselves, nor any of their party, will run any great hazard. For then (I mean if their scribes and

pharisees, if their doctors of the law and interpreters of the gospel, may be believed) the meaning of "Go, ye cursed," shall be the contrary, "Come, ye blessed;" and on the contrary, the blessing shall tacitly imply only a curse; as if that which was spoken to those on the left hand was meant to those on the right; and the words directed to those on the right intended for those on the left hand; it being the usual interpretation of those doctors to make the sense of God's word (how opposite soever to the letter of it) to be always in favour of themselves, and to condemn their foes; who, because they are enemies to the good old cause, must needs be esteemed God's also. But whether this supposition be true or false (with all other controversies betwixt us and them) will be fully, finally, and impartially determined, when they and we shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ; "for we shall all appear," says my text; that is, we shall not only be there, but be present every one of us in his proper shape and likeness: no disguising of persons, no palliating of actions, no concealing of purposes, no dissembling of intentions at all there; "for we must all appear," says my text, *γυμνοὶ καὶ τετραχηλισμένοι* (as the same apostle says in another place), "naked and barefaced," and laid, as it were, flat upon our backs, not before a close or a grand committee of ignorant and partial men, who may deceive and be deceived, but before Christ, the most exact searcher and infallible discerners of all hearts; and before Christ attended on by all the holy angels and blessed saints, amongst whom, to their greater confusion, hypocrites shall perhaps see some sitting at Christ's right hand, whom they have formerly condemned and executed as malignants and delinquents. And amongst these, I doubt not but they will see him whom they have pierced (I mean not Christ God, but God's Christ, or God's anointed), that blessed saint and martyr their own sovereign, whom they so inhumanly and barbarously murdered; and whom, though they would not look upon as an object either of reverence or pity here, they shall, though unwillingly, behold him as an object of horror and confusion there: an object which, next unto hell itself, shall be most dreadful and terrible unto them, whilst his wounds, bleeding afresh at the sight of his murderers, shall at once upbraid, accuse and condemn them.

Howsoever, I am sure they must appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that Christ, who is truth itself, and in whose mouth there was no guile, and therefore he cannot choose but abhor a hypocrite beyond all sinners: that Christ, who would not have his own life defended against the unjust violence of the lawful magistrate, and therefore cannot endure a rebellious hypocrite of all hypocrites, nor a rebel upon a false pretence of religion, of all rebels: lastly, before that Christ that knows well enough that his name and his worship, his word and his sacraments, prayer, fasting, and the rest of his sacred ordinances were only made a

stale by the hypocrites of those times, to conceal, to make way for, and to compass their own covetous, malicious, or ambitious ends: and consequently, whilst they bragged of setting him upon his throne, they placed a reed in his hand instead of a sceptre, and crowned him in jest, whilst they crucified him in earnest; and what is this, but to mock Christ himself as well as the world here? And therefore they themselves shall be mocked by Christ before all the world hereafter: for as they have most unjustly made many innocent and upright men spectacles to men and angels here in this life, so shall they, unless a repentance followed, be made a spectacle to men and angels in the life to come, being first put to open shame by having their mask of piety plucked off, and consequently all the rottenness of their hearts and villany of their designs made evident and apparent, and afterwards a double portion of the most exquisite torments that hell can afford shall be given to them; one moiety for their sins, and another for their hypocrisy; one for their great presumption in their daring to mock God, and another for their far greater impudence in pretending to honour and serve, whilst they did but mock him. This, I say, shall be the portion of the hypocrite at the day of judgment, which appears to be a very bitter one by that of our Saviour, Matt. xxiv. 51, where it seems, a greater punishment cannot be threatened or given than a portion with the hypocrite; and yet even from thence we may collect, that some sinners who are not hypocrites, yet are equally bad, otherwise they would not have their portion assigned with them; and those are such, who are so far from hypocrisy, that they do not nor will not so much as pretend to be religious; I mean those that call themselves Christians, and yet are worse than the worst of pagans, such as sin with a high hand, those impudently presumptuous and profane persons, that are so far from concealing or disguising any of their lewd courses or practices, though never so sinful and shameful, that they not only own and avow them, but value themselves for them; as if to be a witty scoffer, a bold blasphemer, a strong drinker, a notorious fornicator or adulterer, and a desperate contemner of all divine and human laws, were the necessary ingredients towards the composition of a gallant man, and consequently, as if it were possible to be a gallant man and a good Christian; nay, as if it were not possible to be a gallant man, and to be a man, that is a rational creature, without being metamorphosed and transformed into a swine, a goat, or some such brutish creature, by giving up a man's self to all manner of beastly lusts, with as much liberty, and as little shame or remorse, as beasts themselves do: as if God had given men reason, not to govern and restrain, but to stir up and be subservient to their sensual appetite; and what is all this, but to do what is in one's power to unman himself, and turn a rebel, not against divinity and religion, but against humanity and nature itself also?

And now though this, one would think, were as bad as could be, yet it were to be wished that some were not worse; by not worse, I mean, that they would be content and satisfied to walk alone by themselves in the ways and works of darkness, without making it their business (as we see they do) to draw as many others as they can down into hell with them, like the companions of Ulysses, who having drunk of Circe's enchanted cup themselves, and thereby become beasts, afterwards made use of all the beastly inducements they could to prove the preference of that to man's life, and so persuade their other fellows to drink of the same cup, and partake of a like fate with them. And what is this, but to play the devil's part, or to be the prince of darkness's agents or factors here in this world? For as the devil himself is called *δαίμων*, or the tempter, because it is his business, delight, and study, to tempt others; so all that are tempters of others into sin, may, by the same reason, be called devils; I am sure they do the devil's work, and shall have (unless they repent) the devil's wages for it. For if those that "turn other men unto righteousness" (as the prophet says) "shine like stars," or have a much greater degree of glory in heaven, than other good men, who have not been so zealous or industrious to convert others; by the same reason, those who tempt other men into sin shall have a much greater degree of torment in hell than other wicked men, who have not been so malicious or contagious in corrupting and infecting those who have conversed with them; which is an effect of the most diabolical spirit that any man, whilst on this side the grave, can possibly be possessed or endued withal. But whence, I wonder, is this courage against God? Or what is it makes some men so bold and confident, not only by being as wicked as they can themselves, but by endeavouring to make others their proselytes? Is it because they never think of any thing at all beyond the present? If so, they are no wiser than the brute beasts. Or is it because they think of nothing beyond death? And of death too, perhaps, in the most gentle and comfortable notion; I mean, as death is a rest from all labours, a cure of all diseases, an asylum from all enemies, and generally, as it is an end of all worldly troubles, and a deliverance from all earthly calamities and vexations. Truly, I must confess, to have such a notion of death as this is, is no pleasant meditation, especially when we are ready to sink under any severe difficulties or troubles. But, alas! my beloved brethren, death is to be thought upon by Christians, not only as it is the end of one life, but as the commencement of another which for better or worse must last for ever. Nay, death is to be thought upon by wicked Christians, not as the beginning of another life, but as the entrance or passage unto another death; where men shall be dead to all pleasure, to all joy, to all comfort, to all hope; this shall be their deathless life, or a lifeless death; they shall be, however,

alive to pain, alive to shame and horror of conscience, and (which is worst of all) living to despair of ever attaining any end or ease of those torments.

And now I would fain know, whether any the most profligate person has courage enough to think of such a death as this without fear, or the confidence to expect it without trembling? Let us therefore consider it, and you especially, whoever you are, must consider it seriously that forget God, or at least forget him as he is a judge. Consider it, you that by your drunkenness or uncleanness, or by any other profane course of life do seem, as it were, to have made a covenant with death and hell, and think perhaps to have the more favourable usage from the prince of darkness hereafter, the more boldly you have avowed yourselves to be his servants in advancing of his kingdom here; you that have done what you can to prevent your judge, by pronouncing sentence upon yourselves, and damning yourselves as often as you swear, which is almost as often as you speak (for such is the custom of common swearers), think with yourselves, I beseech you, whether your courage, how great soever it be, will serve you, and your strength, how much soever it be, will support you, and for ever too, in such a place and such a condition as I have imperfectly described unto you; "Can any of you dwell, and dwell for ever, in everlasting burnings?" And yet this shall be the dwelling, "this shall be the portion of the hypocrite," says the prophet, Isaiah xxxiii. 14. And the like portion with the hypocrite shall the profane person participate. For though the way of the profane and the hypocrite seem contrary, yet they shall meet, and their end shall be the same; and though they deride and laugh at one another here, yet they shall both of them weep and gnash their teeth together hereafter. For the hypocrite shall be as tow, and the profane person as flax, and "they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them." God of his infinite goodness give them both grace to foresee in time, and by repentance to prevent this their so great danger; for certainly for any man to despise the divine justice, with the endless and intolerable effects of it, is not courage, but madness. And therefore to conclude all in a word, the best method we can take is to judge ourselves, that we may not be judged of the Lord; and because "that day" (as the Lord himself tells us) "shall come as a thief in the night," suddenly and unexpectedly, let us always be sure to have oil in our lamps, that is, faith and repentance in our hearts, justice and charity in our actions; and whatever else we have to do, let it be one part of our daily business seriously to meditate,

1st. Upon the vanity and shortness of our lives; and

2dly. Upon the certainty and uncertainty of our deaths.

3dly. Upon the great exactness and severity of the judgment to come after death; and



4thly. And lastly, upon the eternity and immutability of every man's condition in the other world, whether it be good or evil. And then, I hope, by God's grace sanctifying these our endeavours, our condition there will be such, as we shall have no cause to desire either an end or an alteration of it.

Which God of his mercy grant us all, through the merits of his Son, and the happy conduct of his Holy Spirit. Amen.

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